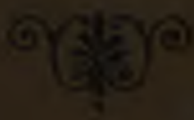
AN EYE FOR AN EYE



ANTHONY TROLLOPE

AN EYE FOR AN EYE.

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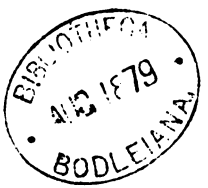
BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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AN EYE FOR AN EYE.

waiting should bring reproaches upon his head. On the night of his arrival at his quarters he despatched a note to his Kate. "Dearest love. "Here I am again in the land of freedom and "potatoes. I need not trouble you with writing "about home news, as I shall see you the day "after to-morrow. All to-morrow and Wednes- "day morning I must stick close to my guns "here. After one on Wednesday I shall be "free. I will drive over to Lahinch, and come "round in the boat. I must come back here "the same night, but I suppose it will be the "next morning before I get to bed. I sha'n't "mind that if I get something for my pains. "My love to your mother. Your own, F. N."

In accordance with this plan he did drive over to Lahinch. He might have saved time by directing that his boat should come across the bay to meet him at Liscannor, but he felt that he would prefer not to meet Father Marty at present. It might be that before long he would be driven to tell the priest a good deal, and

to ask for the priest's assistance; but at present he was not anxious to see Father Marty. Barney Morony was waiting for him at the stable where he put up his horse, and went down with him to the beach. The ladies, according to Barney, were quite well and more winsome than ever. But,—and this information was not given without much delay and great beating about the bush,—there was a rumour about Liscannor that Captain O'Hara had "turned up." Fred was so startled at this that he could not refrain from showing his anxiety by the questions which he asked. Barney did not seem to think that the Captain had been at Ardkill or anywhere in the neighbourhood. At any rate he, Barney, had not seen him. He had just heard the rumour. "Shure, Captain, I wouldn't be telling yer honour "a lie; and they do be saying that the Captain "one time was as fine a man as a woman ever sot "eyes on;—and why not, seeing what kind the "young lady is, God bless her!" If it were true that Kate's father had "turned up," such

an advent might very naturally alter Neville's plans. It would so change the position of things, as to relieve him in some degree from the force of his past promises.

Nevertheless when he saw Kate coming along the cliffs to meet him, the one thing more certain to him than all other things was that he would never abandon her. She had been watching for him almost from the hour at which he had said that he would leave Ennis, and, creeping up among the rocks, had seen his boat as it came round the point from Liscannor. She had first thought that she would climb down the path to meet him; but the tide was high and there was now no strip of strand below the cliffs; and Barney Morony would have been there to see; and she resolved that it would be nicer to wait for him on the summit. "Oh Fred, you have come "back," she said, throwing herself on his breast.

"Yes; I am back. Did you think I was going "to desert you?"

"No; no. I knew you would not desert me.
"Oh, my darling!"

"Dear Kate;—dearest Kate."

"You have thought of me sometimes?"

"I have thought of you always,—every hour." And so he swore to her that she was as much to him as he could possibly be to her. She hung on his arm as she went down to the cottage, and believed herself to be the happiest and most fortunate girl in Ireland. As yet no touch of the sorrows of love had fallen upon her.

He could not all at once ask her as to that rumour which Morony had mentioned to him. But he thought of it as he walked with his arm round her waist. Some question must be asked, but it might, perhaps, be better that he should ask it of the mother. Mrs. O'Hara was at the cottage and seemed almost as glad to see him as Kate had been. "It is very pleasant to have "you back again," she said. "Kate has been "counting first the hours, and then the "minutes."

"And so have you, mother."

"Of course we want to hear all the news," said Mrs. O'Hara. Then Neville, with the girl who was to be his wife, sitting close beside him on the sofa,—almost within his embrace,—told them how things were going at Scroope. His uncle was very weak,—evidently failing; but still so much better as to justify the heir in coming away. He might perhaps live for another twelve months, but the doctors thought it hardly possible that he should last longer than that. Then the nephew went on to say that his uncle was the best and most generous man in the world,—and the finest gentleman and the truest Christian. He told also of the tenants who were not to be harassed, and the servants who were not to be dismissed, and the horses that were to be allowed to die in their beds, and the trees that were not to be cut down.

"I wish I knew him," said Kate. "I wish "I could have seen him once."

"That can never be," said Fred, sadly.

"No;—of course not."

Then Mrs. O'Hara asked a question. "Has "he ever heard of us?"

"Yes;—he has heard of you."

"From you?"

"No;—not first from me. There are many "reasons why I would not have mentioned your "names could I have helped it. He has wished "me to marry another girl,—and especially a "Protestant girl. That was impossible."

"That must be impossible now, Fred," said Kate, looking up into his face.

"Quite so, dearest; but why should I have "vexed him, seeing that he is so good to me, "and that he must be gone so soon?"

"Who had told him of us?" asked Mrs. O'Hara.

"That woman down there at Castle Quin."

"Lady Mary?"

"Foul-tongued old maid that she is," exclaimed Fred. "She writes to my aunt by "every post, I believe."

"What evil can she say of us?"

"She does say evil. Never mind what. "Such a woman always says evil of those of "her sex who are good-looking."

"There, mother;—that's for you," said Kate, laughing. "I don't care what she says."

"If she tells your aunt that we live in a "small cottage, without servants, without "society, with just the bare necessaries of "life, she tells the truth of us."

"That's just what she does say;—and she "goes on harping about religion. Never mind "her. You can understand that my uncle "should be old-fashioned. He is very old, "and we must wait."

"Waiting is so weary," said Mrs. O'Hara.

"It is not weary for me at all," said Kate.

Then he left them, without having said a word about the Captain. He found the Captain to be a subject very uncomfortable to mention, and thought as he was sitting there that it might perhaps be better to make his first enquiries of this priest. No one said a

word to him about the Captain beyond what he had heard from his boatman. For, as it happened, he did not see the priest till May was nearly past, and during all that time things were going from bad to worse. As regarded any services which he rendered to the army at this period of his career, the excuses which he had made to his uncle were certainly not valid. Some pretence at positively necessary routine duties it must be supposed that he made; but he spent more of his time either on the sea, or among the cliffs with Kate, or on the road going backwards and forwards, than he did at his quarters. It was known that he was to leave the regiment and become a great man at home in October, and his brother officers were kind to him. And it was known also, of course, that there was a young lady down on the sea coast beyond Ennistimon, and doubtless there were jokes on the subject. But there was no one with him at Ennis having such weight of fears or

authority as might have served to help to rescue him. During this time Lady Mary Quin still made her reports, and his aunt's letters were full of cautions and entreaties. "I am told," said the Countess, in one of her now detested epistles, "that the young woman "has a reprobate father who has escaped from "the galleys. Oh, Fred, do not break our "hearts." He had almost forgotten the Captain when he received this further rumour which had circulated to him round by Castle Quin and Scroope Manor.

It was all going from bad to worse. He was allowed by the mother to be at the cottage as much as he pleased, and the girl was allowed to wander with him when she would among the cliffs. It was so, although Father Marty himself had more than once cautioned Mrs. O'Hara that she was imprudent. "What "can I do?" she said.. "Have not you your- "self taught me to believe that he is true?"

"Just spake a word to Miss Kate herself."

"What can I say to her now? She regards "him as her husband before God."

"But he is not her husband in any way that "would prevent his taking another wife an' "he plases. And, believe me, Misthress "O'Hara, them sort of young men like a "girl a dale better when there's a little 'Stand "'off' about her."

"It is too late to bid her to be indifferent "to him now, Father Marty."

"I am not saying that Miss Kate is to lose "her lover. I hope I'll have the binding of "'em together myself, and I'll go bail I'll do "it fast enough. In the meanwhile let her "keep herself to herself a little more."

The advice was very good, but Mrs. O'Hara knew not how to make use of it. She could tell the young man that she would have his heart's blood if he deceived them, and she could look at him as though she meant to be as good as her word. She had courage enough for any great emergency. But now that the

lover had been made free of the cottage she knew not how to debar him. She could not break her Kate's heart by expressing doubts to her. And were he to be told to stay away, would he not be lost to them for ever? Of course he could desert them if he would, and then they must die.

It was going from bad to worse certainly; and not the less so because he was more than ever infatuated about the girl. When he had calculated whether it might be possible to desert her he had been at Scroope. He was in County Clare now, and he did not hesitate to tell himself that it was impossible. Whatever might happen, and to whomever he might be false,—he would be true to her. He would at any rate be so true to her that he would not leave her. If he never made her his legal wife, his wife legal at all points, he would always treat her as wife. When his uncle the Earl should die, when the time came in which he would be absolutely free as to his own motions, he would

discover the way in which this might best be done. If it were true that his Kate's father was a convict escaped from the galleys, that surely would be an additional reason why she should not be made Countess of Scroope. Even Mrs. O'Hara herself must understand that. With Kate, with his own Kate, he thought that there would be no difficulty.

From bad to worse! Alas, alas; there came a day in which the pricelessness of the girl he loved sank to nothing, vanished away, and was as a thing utterly lost, even in his eyes. The poor unfortunate one,—to whom beauty had been given, and grace, and softness,—and beyond all these and finer than these, innocence as unsullied as the whiteness of the plumage on the breast of a dove; but to whom, alas, had not been given a protector strong enough to protect her softness, or guardian wise enough to guard her innocence! To her he was godlike, noble, excellent, all but holy. He was the man whom Fortune, more than kind, had sent to her to be

the joy of her existence, the fountain of her life, the strong staff for her weakness. Not to believe in him would be the foulest treason! To lose him would be to die! To deny him would be to deny her God! She gave him all;—and her pricelessness in his eyes was gone for ever.

He was sitting with her one day towards the end of May on the edge of the cliff, looking down upon the ocean and listening to the waves, when it occurred to him that he might as well ask her about her father. It was absurd he thought to stand upon any ceremony with her. He was very good to her, and intended to be always good to her, but it was essentially necessary to him to know the truth. He was not aware, perhaps, that he was becoming rougher with her than had been his wont. She certainly was not aware of it, though there was a touch of awe sometimes about her as she answered him. She was aware that she now shewed to him an absolute obedience in all things which had not been

customary with her; but then it was so sweet to obey him; so happy a thing to have such a master! If he rebuked her, he did it with his arm round her waist, so that she could look into his face and smile as she promised that she would be good and follow his behests in all things. He had been telling her now of some fault in her dress, and she had been explaining that such faults would come when money was so scarce. Then he had offered her gifts. A gift she would of course take. She had already taken gifts which were the treasures of her heart. But he must not pay things for her till,—till—. Then she again looked up into his face and smiled. "You are not angry with "me?" she said.

"Kate,—I want to ask you a particular "question."

"What question?"

"You must not suppose, let the answer be "what it may, that it can make any difference "between you and me."

"Oh,—I hope not," she replied trembling.

"It shall make none," he answered with all a master's assurance and authority. "There-"fore you need not be afraid to answer me. "Tidings have reached me on a matter as to "which I ought to be informed."

"What matter? Oh Fred, you do so frighten "me. I'll tell you anything I know."

"I have been told that—that your father—"is alive." He looked down upon her and could see that her face was red up to her very hair. "Your mother once told me that she had "never been certain of his death."

"I used to think he was dead."

"But now you think he is alive?"

"I think he is;—but I do not know. I never "saw my father so as to remember him; though "I do remember that we used to be very "unhappy when we were in Spain."

"And what have you heard lately? Tell me "the truth, you know."

"Of course I shall tell you the truth, Fred.

"I think mother got a letter, but she did not "shew it me. She said just a word, but "nothing more. Father Marty will certainly "know if she knows."

"And you know nothing?"

"Nothing."

"I think I must ask Father Marty."

"But will it matter to you?" Kate asked.

"At any rate it shall not matter to you," he said, kissing her. And then again she was happy; though there had now crept across her heart the shadow of some sad foreboding, a foretaste of sorrow that was not altogether bitter as sorrow is, but which taught her to cling closely to him when he was there and would fill her eyes with tears when she thought of him in his absence.

On this day he had not found Mrs. O'Hara at the cottage. She had gone down to Liscannor, Kate told him. He had sent his boat back to the strand near that village, round the point and into the bay, as it could not well lie under

the rocks at high tide, and he now asked Kate to accompany him as he walked down. They would probably meet her mother on the road. Kate, as she tied on her hat, was only too happy to be his companion. "I think," he said, "that I shall try and see Father Marty "as I go back. If your mother has really "heard anything about your father, she ought "to have told me."

"Don't be angry with mother, Fred."

"I won't be angry with you, my darling," said the master with masterful tenderness.

Although he had intimated his intention of calling on the priest that very afternoon, it may be doubted whether he was altogether gratified when he met the very man with Mrs. O'Hara close to the old burying ground. "Ah, Mr. "Neville," said the priest, "and how's it all "wid you this many a day?"

"The top of the morning to you thin, Father "Marty," said Fred, trying to assume an Irish brogue. Nothing could be more friendly than

the greeting. The old priest took off his hat to Kate, and made a low bow, as though he should say,—to the future Countess of Scroope I owe a very especial respect. Mrs. O'Hara held her future son-in-law's hand for a moment, as though she might preserve him for her daughter by some show of affection on her own part. "And now, Misthress O'Hara," said the priest, "as I've got a companion to go back wid me, "I'm thinking I'll not go up the hill any "further." Then they parted, and Kate looked as though she were being robbed of her due because her lover could not give her one farewell kiss in the priest's presence.

CHAPTER II.

IS SHE TO BE YOUR WIFE?

"It's quite a sthranger you are, these days," said the priest, as soon as they had turned their backs upon the ladies.

"Well; yes. We haven't managed to meet "since I came back;—have we?"

"I've been pretty constant at home, too. "But you like them cliffs up there, better than "the village no doubt."

"Metal more attractive, Father Marty," said Fred laughing;—"not meaning however any "slight upon Liscannor or the Cork whisky."

"The Cork whisky is always to the fore, "Mr. Neville. And how did you lave matters "with your noble uncle?"

Neville at the present moment was anxious

rather to speak of Kate's ignoble father than of his own noble uncle. He had declared his intention of making inquiry of Father Marty, and he thought that he should do so with something of a high hand. He still had that scheme in his head, and he might perhaps be better prepared to discuss it with the priest if he could first make this friend of the O'Hara family understand how much he, Neville, was personally injured by this "turning up" of a disreputable father. But, should he allow the priest at once to run away to Scroope and his noble uncle, the result of such conversation would simply be renewed promises on his part in reference to his future conduct to Kate O'Hara.

"Lord Scroope wasn't very well when I left "him. By the bye, Father Marty, I've been "particularly anxious to see you."

"'Deed thin I was aisy found, Mr. Neville."

"What is this I hear about — Captain "O'Hara?"

"What is it that you have heard, Mr. "Neville?" Fred looked into the priest's face and found that he, at least, did not blush. It may be that all power of blushing had departed from Father Marty.

"In the first place I hear that there is such "a man."

"Ony way there was once."

"You think he's dead then?"

"I don't say that. It's a matter of,—faith, "thin, it's a matter of nigh twenty years since "I saw the Captain. And when I did see "him I didn't like him. I can tell you that, "Mr. Neville."

"I suppose not."

"That lass up there was not born when I "saw him. He was a handsome man too, "and might have been a gentleman av' he "would."

"But he wasn't."

"It's a hard thing to say what is a gentle-"man, Mr. Neville. I don't know a much

"harder thing. Them folk at Castle Quin "now, wouldn't scruple to say that I'm no "gentleman, just because I'm a Popish priest. "I say that Captain O'Hara was no gentleman "because—he ill-treated a woman." Father Marty as he said this stopped a moment on the road, turning round and looking Neville full in the face. Fred bore the look fairly well. Perhaps at the moment he did not understand its application. It may be that he still had a clear conscience in that matter, and thought that he was resolved to treat Kate O'Hara after a fashion that would in no way detract from his own character as a gentleman. "As it was," continued the priest, "he was a low blag-guard."

"He hadn't any money, I suppose?"

"'Deed and I don't think he was iver "throubled much in respect of money. But "money doesn't matter, Mr. Neville."

"Not in the least," said Fred.

"Thim ladies up there are as poor as Job, but

"anybody that should say that they weren't "ladies would just be shewing that he didn't "know the difference. The Captain was well "born, Mr. Neville, av' that makes ony odds."

"Birth does go for something, Father "Marty."

"Thin let the Captain have the advantage. "Them O'Haras of Kildare weren't proud of "him I'm thinking, but he was a chip of "that block; and some one belonging to him "had seen the errors of the family ways, in "respect of making him a Papist. 'Deed and "I must say, Mr. Neville, when they send us "any offsets from a Prothestant family it isn't "the best that they give us."

"I suppose not, Father Marty."

"We can make something of a bit of wood "that won't take ony shape at all, at all along "wid them. But there wasn't much to boast "of along of the Captain."

"But is he alive, Father Marty;—or is he "dead? I think I've a right to be told."

"I am glad to hear you ask it as a right, "Mr. Neville. You have a right if that "young lady up there is to be your wife." Fred made no answer here, though the priest paused for a moment, hoping that he would do so. But the question could be asked again, and Father Marty went on to tell all that he knew, and all that he had heard of Captain O'Hara. He was alive. Mrs. O'Hara had received a letter purporting to be from her husband, giving an address in London, and asking for money. He, Father Marty, had seen the letter; and he thought that there might perhaps be a doubt whether it was written by the man of whom they were speaking. Mrs. O'Hara had declared that if it were so written the handwriting was much altered. But then in twelve years the writing of a man who drank hard will change. It was twelve years since she had last received a letter from him.

"And what do you believe?"

"I think he lives, and that he wrote it, "Mr. Neville. I'll tell you God's truth about "it as I believe it, because as I said before, "I think you are entitled to know the truth."

"And what was done?"

"I sent off to London,—to a friend I "have."

"And what did your friend say?"

"He says there is a man calling himself "Captain O'Hara."

"And is that all?"

"She got a second letter. She got it the "very last day you was down here. Pat "Cleary took it up to her when you was "out wid Miss Kate."

"He wants money, I suppose."

"Just that, Mr. Neville."

"It makes a difference;—doesn't it?"

"How does it make a difference?"

"Well; it does. I wonder you don't see it. "You must see it." From that moment Father Marty said in his heart that Kate O'Hara

had lost her husband. Not that he admitted for a moment that Captain O'Hara's return, if he had returned, would justify the lover in deserting the girl; but that he perceived that Neville had already allowed himself to entertain the plea. The whole affair had in the priest's estimation been full of peril; but then the prize to be won was very great! From the first he had liked the young man, and had not doubted,—did not now doubt,—but that if once married he would do justice to his wife. Even though Kate should fail and should come out of the contest with a scorched heart,—and that he had thought more than probable,—still the prize was very high and the girl he thought was one who could survive such a blow. Latterly, in that respect he had changed his opinion. Kate had shewn herself to be capable of so deep a passion that he was now sure that she would be more than scorched should the fire be one to injure and not to cherish her. But the man's promises had been so firm, so

often reiterated, were so clearly written, that the priest had almost dared to hope that the thing was assured. Now, alas, he perceived that the embryo English lord was already looking for a means of escape, and already thought that he had found it in this unfortunate return of the father. The whole extent of the sorrow even the priest did not know. But he was determined to fight the battle to the very last. The man should make the girl his wife, or he, Father Marty, parish priest of Liscannor, would know the reason why. He was a man who was wont to desire to know the reason why, as to matters which he had taken in hand. But when he heard the words which Neville spoke and marked the tone in which they were uttered he felt that the young man was preparing for himself a way of escape.

"I don't see that it should make any dif-
"ference," he said shortly.

"If the man be disreputable,——"

"The daughter is not therefore disreput-
"able. Her position is not changed."

"I have to think of my friends."

"You should have thought of that before you "declared yourself to her, Mr. Neville." How true this was now, the young man knew better than the priest, but that, as yet, was his own secret. "You do not mean to tell me that "because the father is not all that he should "be, she is therefore to be thrown over. That "cannot be your idea of honour. Have you "not promised that you would make her your "wife?" The priest stopped for an answer, but the young man made him none. "Of "course you have promised her."

"I suppose she has told you so."

"To whom should she tell her story? To "whom should she go for advice? But it was "you who told me so, yourself."

"Never."

"Did you not swear to me that you would "not injure her? And why should there have "been any talk with you and me about her, "but that I saw what was coming? When a

"young man like you chooses to spend his "hours day after day and week after week with "such a one as she is, with a beautiful young "girl, a sweet innocent young lady, so sweet "as to make even an ould priest like me feel "that the very atmosphere she breathes is per- "fumed and hallowed, must it not mean one of "two things;—that he desires to make her his "wife or else,—or else something so vile that "I will not name it in connection with Kate "O'Hara? Then as her mother's friend, and "as hers,—as their only friend near them, I "spoke out plainly to you, and you swore to me "that you intended no harm to her."

"I would not harm her for the world."

"When you said that, you told me as plainly "as you could spake that she should be your "wife. With her own mouth she never told "me. Her mother has told me. Daily Mrs. "O'Hara has spoken to me of her hopes and "fears. By the Lord above me whom I "worship, and by His Son in whom I rest all

"my hopes, I would not stand in your shoes if "you intend to tell that woman that after all that "has passed you mean to desert her child."

"Who has talked of deserting?" asked Neville angrily.

"Say that you will be true to her, that you "will make her your wife before God and man, "and I will humbly ask your pardon."

"All that I say is that this Captain O'Hara's "coming is a nuisance."

"If that be all, there is an end of it. It is a "nuisance. Not that I suppose he ever will "come. If he persists she must send him a "little money. There shall be no difficulty "about that. She will never ask you to supply "the means of keeping her husband."

"It isn't the money. I think you hardly "understand my position, Father Marty." It seemed to Neville that if it was ever his intention to open out his scheme to the priest, now was his time for doing so. They had come to the cross roads at which one way led down to the

village and to Father Marty's house, and the other to the spot on the beach where the boat would be waiting. "I can't very well go on "to Liscannor," said Neville.

"Give me your word before we part that you "will keep your promise to Miss O'Hara," said the priest.

"If you will step on a few yards with me I will "tell you just how I am situated." Then the priest assented, and they both went on towards the beach, walking very slowly. "If I alone "were concerned, I would give up everything "for Miss O'Hara. I am willing to give up "everything as regards myself. I love her so "dearly that she is more to me than all the "honours and wealth that are to come to me "when my uncle dies."

"What is to hinder but that you should "have the girl you love and your uncle's "honours and wealth into the bargain?"

"That is just it."

"By the life of me I don't see any difficulty.

"You're your own masther. The ould Earl "can't disinherit you if he would."

"But I am bound down."

"How bound? Who can bind you?"

"I am bound not to make Miss O'Hara "Countess of Scroope."

"What binds you? You are bound by "a hundred promises to make her your "wife."

"I have taken an oath that no Roman "Catholic shall become Countess Scroope as my "wife."

"Then, Mr. Neville, let me tell you that you "must break your oath."

"Would you have me perjure myself?"

"Faith I would. Perjure yourself one way you "certainly must, av' you've taken such an oath "as that, for you've sworn many oaths that you "would make this Catholic lady your wife. Not "make a Roman Catholic Countess of Scroope! "It's the impudence of some of you Prothestants "that kills me entirely. As though we couldn't

"count Countesses against you and beat you by "chalks! I ain't the man to call hard names, "Mr. Neville; but if one of us is upstarts, it's "aisy seeing which. Your uncle's an ould man, "and I'm told nigh to his latter end. I'm not "saying but what you should respect even his "wakeness. But you'll not look me in the face "and tell me that afther what's come and gone "that young lady is to be cast on one side like "a plucked rose, because an ould man has spoken "a foolish word, or because a young man has "made a wicked promise."

They were now standing again, and Fred raised his hat and rubbed his forehead as he endeavoured to arrange the words in which he could best propose his scheme to the priest. He had not yet escaped from the idea that because Father Marty was a Roman Catholic priest, living in a village in the extreme west of Ireland, listening night and day to the roll of the Atlantic and drinking whisky punch, therefore he would be found to be romantic, semi-

barbarous, and perhaps more than semi-lawless in his views of life. Irish priests have been made by chroniclers of Irish story to do marvellous things; and Fred Neville thought that this priest, if only the matter could be properly introduced, might be persuaded to do for him something romantic, something marvellous, perhaps something almost lawless. In truth it might have been difficult to find a man more practical or more honest than Mr. Marty. And then the difficulty of introducing the subject was very great. Neville stood with his face a little averted, rubbing his forehead as he raised his sailor's hat. "If you could only read my heart," he said, "you'd know that I am as true as "steel."

"I'd be lothe to doubt it, Mr. Neville."

"I'd give up everything to call Kate my "own."

"But you need give up nothing, and yet have "her all your own."

"You say that because you don't completely

"understand. It may as well be taken for "granted at once that she can never be Countess "of Scroope."

"Taken for granted!" said the old man as the fire flashed out of his eyes.

"Just listen to me for one moment. I will "marry her to-morrow, or at any time you may "fix, if a marriage can be so arranged that she "shall never be more than Mrs. Neville."

"And what would you be?"

"Mr. Neville."

"And what would her son be?"

"Oh;—just the same,—when he grew up. "Perhaps there wouldn't be a son."

"God forbid that there should on those terms. "You intend that your children and her children "shall be—bastards. That's about it, Mr. "Neville." The romance seemed to vanish when the matter was submitted to him in this very prosaic manner. "As to what you might "choose to call yourself, that would be nothing "to me and not very much I should say, to

"her. I believe a man needn't be a lord unless "he likes to be a lord;—and needn't call his "wife a countess. But, Mr. Neville, when you "have married Miss O'Hara, and when your "uncle shall have died, there can be no other "Countess of Scroope, and her child must be "the heir to your uncle's title."

"All that I could give her except that, she "should have."

"But she must have that. She must be your "wife before God and man, and her children "must be the children of honour and not of "disgrace." Ah,—if the priest had known it all!

"I would live abroad with her, and her "mother should live with us."

"You mean that you would take Kate O'Hara "as your misthress! And you make this as a "proposal to me! Upon my word, Mr. Neville, "I don't think that I quite understand what it "is that you're maning to say to me. Is she to "be your wife?"

"Yes," said Neville, urged by the perturbation of his spirit to give a stronger assurance than he had intended.

"Then must her son if she have one be the "future Earl of Scroope. He may be Protes- "thant,—or what you will?"

"You don't understand me, Father Marty."

"Faith, and that's thrue. But we are at "the baich, Mr. Neville, and I've two miles "along the coast to Liscannor."

"Shall I make Barney take you round in the "canoe?"

"I believe I may as well walk it. Good-bye, "Mr. Neville. I'm glad at any rate to hear "you say so distinctly that you are resolved at "all hazards to make that dear girl your wife." This he said, almost in a whisper, standing close to the boat, with his hand on Neville's shoulder. He paused a moment as though to give special strength to his words, and Neville did not dare or was not able to protest against the assertion. Father Marty himself was certainly not romantic

in his manner of managing such an affair as this in which they were now both concerned.

Neville went back to Ennis much depressed, turning the matter over in his mind almost hopelessly. This was what had come from his adventures! No doubt he might marry the girl, — postponing his marriage till after his uncle's death. For aught he knew as yet that might still be possible. But were he to do so, he would disgrace his family, and disgrace himself by breaking the solemn promise he had made. And in such case he would be encumbered, and possibly be put beyond the pale of that sort of life which should be his as Earl of Scroope, by having Captain O'Hara as his father-in-law. He was aware now that he would be held by all his natural friends to have ruined himself by such a marriage.

On the other hand he could, no doubt, throw the girl over. They could not make him marry her though they could probably make him pay very dearly for not doing so. If he could only

harden his heart sufficiently he could escape in that way. But he was not hard, and he did feel that so escaping, he would have a load on his breast which would make his life unendurable. Already he was beginning to hate the coast of Ireland, and to think that the gloom of Scroope Manor was preferable to it.

CHAPTER III.

FRED NEVILLE RECEIVES A VISITOR AT ENNIS.

For something over three weeks after his walk with the priest Neville saw neither of the two ladies of Ardkill. Letters were frequent between the cottage and the barracks at Ennis, but,—so said Fred himself, military duties detained him with the troop. He explained that he had been absent a great deal, and that now Captain Johnson was taking his share of ease. He was all alone at the barracks, and could not get away. There was some truth in this, created perhaps by the fact that as he didn't stir, Johnson could do so. Johnson was backwards and forwards, fishing at Castle Connel, and Neville was very exact in explaining that for the present he was obliged to

give up all the delights of the coast. But the days were days of trial to him.

A short history of the life of Captain O'Hara was absolutely sent to him by the Countess of Scroope. The family lawyer, at the instance of the Earl,—as she said, though probably her own interference had been more energetic than that of the Earl,—had caused enquiries to be made. Captain O'Hara, the husband of the lady who was now living on the coast of County Clare, and who was undoubtedly the father of the Miss O'Hara whom Fred knew, had passed at least ten of the latter years of his life at the galleys in the south of France. He had been engaged in an extensive swindling transaction at Bordeaux, and had thence been transferred to Toulon, had there been maintained by France, —and was now in London. The Countess in sending this interesting story to her nephew at Ennis, with ample documentary evidence, said that she was sure that he would not degrade his family utterly by thinking of allying himself

with people who were so thoroughly disreputable; but that, after all that was passed, his uncle expected from him a renewed assurance on the matter. He answered this in anger. He did not understand why the history of Captain O'Hara should have been raked up. Captain O'Hara was nothing to him. He supposed it had come from Castle Quin, and anything from Castle Quin he disbelieved. He had given a promise once and he didn't understand why he should be asked for any further assurance. He thought it very hard that his life should be made a burden to him by foul-mouthed rumours from Castle Quin. That was the tenour of his letter to his aunt; but even that letter sufficed to make it almost certain that he could never marry the girl. He acknowledged that he had bound himself not to do so. And then, in spite of all that he said about the mendacity of Castle Quin, he did believe the little history. And it was quite out of the question that he should marry the

daughter of a returned galley-slave. He did not think that any jury in England would hold him to be bound by such a promise. Of course he would do whatever he could for his dear Kate; but, even after all that had passed, he could not pollute himself by marriage with the child of so vile a father. Poor Kate! Her sufferings would have been occasioned not by him, but by her father.

In the meantime Kate's letters to him became more and more frequent, more and more sad,—filled ever with still increasing warmth of entreaty. At last they came by every post, though he knew how difficult it must be for her to find daily messengers into Ennistimon. Would he not come and see her? He must come and see her. She was ill and would die unless he came to her. He did not always answer these letters, but he did write to her perhaps twice a week. He would come very soon;—as soon as Johnson had come back from his fishing. She was not to fret herself. Of

course he could not always be at Ardkill. He too had things to trouble him. Then he told her that he had received letters from home which caused him very much trouble; and there was a something of sharpness in his words, which brought from her a string of lamentations in which, however, the tears and wailings did not as yet take the form of reproaches. Then there came a short note from Mrs. O'Hara herself. "I must beg that you will come to Ardkill at "once. It is absolutely necessary for Kate's "safety that you should do so."

When he received this he thought that he would go on the morrow. When the morrow came he determined to postpone the journey for yet another day! The calls of duty are so much less imperious than those of pleasure! On that further day he still meant to go, as he sat about noon unbraced, only partly dressed in his room at the barracks. His friend Johnson was back in Ennis, and there was also a Cornet with the troop. He had no excuse

whatever on the score of military duty for remaining at home on that day. But he sat idling his time, thinking of things. All the charm of the adventure was gone. He was sick of the canoe and of Barney Morony. He did not care a straw for the seals or wild gulls. The moaning of the ocean beneath the cliff was no longer pleasurable to him,—and as to the moaning at their summit, to tell the truth, he was afraid of it. The long drive thither and back was tedious to him. He thought now more of the respectability of his family than of the beauty of Kate O'Hara.

But still he meant to go,—certainly would go on this very day. He had desired that his gig should be ready, and had sent word to say that he might start at any moment. But still he sat in his dressing-gown at noon, unbraced, with a novel in his hand which he could not read, and a pipe by his side which he could not smoke. Close to him on the table lay that record of the life of Captain O'Hara, which his aunt had sent

him, every word of which he had now examined for the third or fourth time. Of course he could not marry the girl. Mrs. O'Hara had deceived him. She could not but have known that her husband was a convict;—and had kept the knowledge back from him in order that she might allure him to the marriage. Anything that money could do, he would do. Or, if they would consent, he would take the girl away with him to some sunny distant clime, in which adventures might still be sweet, and would then devote to her—some portion of his time. He had not yet ruined himself, but he would indeed ruin himself were he, the heir to the earldom of Scroope, to marry the daughter of a man who had been at the French galleys! He had just made up his mind that he would be firm in this resolution,—when the door opened and Mrs. O'Hara entered his room. "Mrs. O'Hara."

She closed the door carefully behind her before she spoke, excluding the military servant who had wished to bar her entrance. "Yes,

"sir; as you would not come to us I have been "forced to come to you. I know it all. When "will you make my child your wife?"

Yes. In the abjectness of her misery the poor girl had told her mother the story of her disgrace; or, rather, in her weakness had suffered her secret to fall from her lips. That terrible retribution was to come upon her which, when sin has been mutual, falls with so crushing a weight upon her who of the two sinners has ever been by far the less sinful. She, when she knew her doom, simply found herself bound by still stronger ties of love to him who had so cruelly injured her. She was his before; but now she was more than ever his. To have him near her, to give her orders that she might obey them, was the consolation that she coveted, —the only consolation that could have availed anything to her. To lean against him, and to whisper to him, with face averted, with half-formed syllables, some fervent words that might convey to him a truth which might be almost a

joy to her if he would make it so,—was the one thing that could restore hope to her bosom. Let him come and be near to her, so that she might hide her face upon his breast. But he came not. He did not come, though, as best she knew how, she had thrown all her heart into her letters. Then her spirit sank within her, and she sickened, and as her mother knelt over her, she allowed her secret to fall from her.

Fred Neville's sitting-room at Ennis was not a chamber prepared for the reception of ladies. It was very rough, as are usually barrack rooms in outlying quarters in small towns in the west of Ireland,—and it was also very untidy. The more prudent and orderly of mankind might hardly have understood why a young man, with prospects and present wealth such as belonged to Neville, should choose to spend a twelve-month in such a room, contrary to the wishes of all his friends, when London was open to him, and the continent, and scores of the best

appointed houses in England, and all the glories of ownership at Scroope. There were guns about, and whips, hardly half a dozen books, and a few papers. There were a couple of swords lying on a table that looked like a dresser. The room was not above half covered with its carpet, and though there were three large easy chairs, even they were torn and soiled. But all this had been compatible with adventures,—and while the adventures were simply romantic and not a bit troublesome, the barracks at Ennis had been to him by far preferable to the gloomy grandeur of Scroope.

And now Mrs. O'Hara was there, telling him that she knew of all! Not for a moment did he remain ignorant of the meaning of her communication. And now the arguments to be used against him in reference to the marriage would be stronger than ever. A silly, painful smile came across his handsome face as he attempted to welcome her, and moved a chair for her accommodation. "I am so sorry that

"you have had the trouble of coming over," he said.

"That is nothing. When will you make my "child your wife?" How was he to answer this? In the midst of his difficulties he had brought himself to one determination. He had resolved that under no pressure would he marry the daughter of O'Hara, the galley-slave. As far as that, he had seen his way. Should he now at once speak of the galley-slave, and, with expressions of regret, decline the alliance on that reason? Having dishonoured this woman's daughter should he shelter himself behind the dishonour of her husband? That he meant to do so ultimately is true; but at the present moment such a task would have required a harder heart than his. She rose from her chair and stood close over him as she repeated her demand, "When will you make my child your wife?"

"You do not want me to answer you at this "moment?"

"Yes;—at this moment. Why not answer

"me at once? She has told me all. Mr. "Neville, you must think not only of her, but "of your child also."

"I hope not that," he said.

"I tell you that it is so. Now answer me. "When shall my Kate become your wife?"

He still knew that any such consummation as that was quite out of the question. The mother herself as she was now present to him, seemed to be a woman very different from the quiet, handsome, high-spirited, but low-voiced widow whom he had known, or thought that he had known, at Ardkill. Of her as she had there appeared to him he had not been ashamed to think as one who might at some future time be personally related to himself. He had recognized her as a lady whose outward trappings, poor though they might be, were suited to the seclusion in which she lived. But now, although it was only to Ennis that she had come from her nest among the rocks, she seemed to be unfitted for even so much intercourse with the

world as that. And in the demand which she reiterated over him she hardly spoke as a lady would speak. Would not all they who were connected with him at home have a right to complain if he were to bring such a woman with him to England as the mother of his wife. "I "can't answer such a question as that on the "spur of the moment," he said.

"You will not dare to tell me that you mean "to desert her?"

"Certainly not. I was coming over to Ardkill "this very day. The trap is ordered. I hope "Kate is well?"

"She is not well. How should she be well?"

"Why not? I didn't know. If there is "anything that she wants that I can get for her, "you have only to speak."

In the utter contempt which Mrs. O'Hara now felt for the man she probably forgot that his immediate situation was one in which it was nearly impossible that any man should conduct himself with dignity. Having brought himself

to his present pass by misconduct, he could discover no line of good conduct now open to him. Moralists might tell him that let the girl's parentage be what it might, he ought to marry her; but he was stopped from that, not only by his oath, but by a conviction that his highest duty required him to preserve his family from degradation. And yet to a mother, with such a demand on her lips as that now made by Mrs. O'Hara,—whose demand was backed by such circumstances,—how was it possible that he should tell the truth and plead the honour of his family? His condition was so cruel that it was no longer possible to him to be dignified or even true. The mother again made her demand. "There is one thing that you must do for her "before other things can be thought of. When "shall she become your wife?"

It was for a moment on his tongue to tell her that it could not be so while his uncle lived;—but to this he at once felt that there were two objections, directly opposed to each other, but

each so strong as to make any such reply very dangerous. It would imply a promise, which he certainly did not intend to keep, of marrying the girl when his uncle should be dead; and, although promising so much more than he intended to perform, would raise the ungovernable wrath of the woman before him. That he should now hesitate,—now, in her Kate's present condition,—as to redeeming those vows of marriage which he had made to her in her innocence, would raise a fury in the mother's bosom which he feared to encounter. He got up and walked about the room, while she stood with her eyes fixed upon him, ever and anon reiterating her demand. "No day must now "be lost. When will you make my child your "wife?"

At last he made a proposition to which she assented. The tidings which she had brought him had come upon him very suddenly. He was inexpressibly pained. Of course Kate, his dearest Kate, was everything to him. Let him

have that afternoon to think about it. On the morrow he would assuredly visit Ardkill. The mother, full of fears, resolving that should he attempt to play her girl false and escape from her she would follow him to the end of the world, but feeling that at the present moment she could not constrain him, accepted his repeated promise as to the following day; and at last left him to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

NEVILLE'S SUCCESS.

NEVILLE sat in his room alone, without moving, for a couple of hours after Mrs. O'Hara had left him. In what way should he escape from the misery and ruin which seemed to surround him? An idea did cross his mind that it would be better for him to fly and write the truth from the comparatively safe distance of his London club. But there would be a meanness in such conduct which would make it impossible that he should ever again hold up his head. The girl had trusted to him, and by trusting to him had brought herself to this miserable pass. He could not desert her. It would be better that he should go and endure all the vials of their wrath than that. To her

he would still be tenderly loving, if she would accept his love without the name which he could not give her. His whole life he would sacrifice to her. Every luxury which money could purchase he would lavish on her. He must go and make his offer. The vials of wrath which would doubtless be poured out upon his head would not come from her. In his heart of hearts he feared both the priest and the mother. But there are moments in which a man feels himself obliged to encounter all that he most fears;—and the man who does not do so in such moments is a coward.

He quite made up his mind to start early on the following morning; but the intermediate hours were very sad and heavy, and his whole outlook into life was troublesome to him. How infinitely better would it have been for him had he allowed himself to be taught a twelvemonth since that his duty required him to give up the army at once! But he had made his bed, and now he must lie upon it. There was no escape from

this journey to Ardkill. Even though he should be stunned by their wrath he must endure it.

He breakfasted early the next day, and got into his gig before nine. He must face the enemy, and the earlier that he did it the better. His difficulty now lay in arranging the proposition that he would make and the words that he should speak. Every difficulty would be smoothed and every danger dispelled if he would only say that he would marry the girl as quickly as the legal forms would allow. Father Marty, he knew, would see to all that, and the marriage might be done effectually. He had quite come to understand that Father Marty was practical rather than romantic. But there would be cowardice in this as mean as that other cowardice. He believed himself to be bound by his duty to his family. Were he now to renew his promise of marriage, such renewal would be caused by fear and not by duty, and would be mean. They should tear him piecemeal rather than get from him such a promise. Then he thought of

the Captain, and perceived that he must make all possible use of the Captain's character. Would anybody conceive that he, the heir of the Scroope family, was bound to marry the daughter of a convict returned from the galleys? And was it not true that such promise as he had made had been obtained under false pretences? Why had he not been told of the Captain's position when he first made himself intimate with the mother and daughter?

Instead of going as was his custom to Lahinch, and then rowing across the bay and round the point, he drove his gig to the village of Liscannor. He was sick of Barney Morony and the canoe, and never desired to see either of them again. He was sick indeed, of everything Irish, and thought that the whole island was a mistake. He drove however boldly through Liscannor and up to Father Marty's yard, and, not finding the priest at home, there left his horse and gig. He had determined that he would first go to the priest and boldly

declare that nothing should induce him to marry the daughter of a convict. But Father Marty was not at home. The old woman who kept his house believed that he had gone into Ennistown. He was away with his horse, and would not be back till dinner time. Then Neville, having seen his own nag taken from the gig, started on his walk up to Ardkill.

How ugly the country was to his eyes as he now saw it. Here and there stood a mud cabin, and the small, half-cultivated fields, or rather patches of land, in which the thin oat crops were beginning to be green, were surrounded by low loose ramshackle walls, which were little more than heaps of stone, so carelessly had they been built and so negligently preserved. A few cocks and hens with here and there a miserable, starved pig seemed to be the stock of the country. Not a tree, not a shrub, not a flower was there to be seen. The road was narrow, rough, and unused. The burial ground which he passed was the liveliest sign of humanity

about the place. Then the country became still wilder, and there was no road. The oats also ceased, and the walls. But he could hear the melancholy moan of the waves, which he had once thought to be musical and had often sworn that he loved. Now the place with all its attributes was hideous to him, distasteful, and abominable. At last the cottage was in view, and his heart sank very low. Poor Kate! He loved her dearly through it all. He endeavoured to take comfort by assuring himself that his heart was true to her. Not for worlds would he injure her;—that is, not for worlds, had any worlds been exclusively his own. On account of the Scroope world,—which was a world general rather than particular,—no doubt he must injure her most horribly. But still she was his dear Kate, his own Kate, his Kate whom he would never desert.

When he came up to the cottage the little gate was open, and he knew that somebody was there besides the usual inmates. His heart at

once told him that it was the priest. His fate had brought him face to face with his two enemies at once! His breath almost left him, but he knew that he could not run away. However bitter might be the vials of wrath he must encounter them. So he knocked at the outer door and, after his custom, walked into the passage. Then he knocked again at the door of the one sitting-room,—the door which hitherto he had always passed with the conviction that he should bring delight,—and for a moment there was no answer. He heard no voice and he knocked again. The door was opened for him, and as he entered he met Father Marty. But he at once saw that there was another man in the room, seated in an arm chair near the window. Kate, his Kate, was not there, but Mrs. O'Hara was standing at the head of the sofa, far away from the window and close to the door. "It is Mr. Neville," said the priest. "It is as well that he should come "in."

"Mr. Neville," said the man rising from his chair, "I am informed that you are a suitor for "the hand of my daughter. Your prospects in "life are sufficient, sir, and I give my consent."

The man was a thing horrible to look at, tall, thin, cadaverous, ill-clothed, with his wretched and all but ragged overcoat buttoned close up to his chin, with long straggling thin grizzled hair, red-nosed, with a drunkard's eyes, and thin lips drawn down at the corners of the mouth. This was Captain O'Hara; and if any man ever looked like a convict returned from work in chains, such was the appearance of this man. This was the father of Fred's Kate;—the man whom it was expected that he, Frederic Neville, the future Earl of Scroope, should take as his father-in-law! "This is "Captain O'Hara," said the priest. But even Father Marty, bold as he was, could not assume the voice with which he had rebuked Neville as he walked with him, now nearly a month ago, down to the beach.

Neville did feel that the abomination of the man's appearance strengthened his position. He stood looking from one to another, while Mrs. O'Hara remained silent in the corner. "Perhaps," said he, "I had better not be here. "I am intruding."

"It is right that you should know it all," said the priest. "As regards the young lady it "cannot now alter your position. This gentle- "man must be—arranged for."

"Oh, certainly," said the Captain. "I must "be——arranged for, and that so soon as pos- "sible." The man spoke with a slightly foreign accent and in a tone, as Fred thought, which savoured altogether of the galleys. "You have "done me the honour, I am informed, to make "my daughter all your own. These estimable "people assure me that you hasten to make "her your wife on the instant. I consent. "The O'Haras, who are of the very oldest "blood in Europe, have always connected them- "selves highly. Your uncle is a most excellent

"nobleman whose hand I shall be proud to "grasp." As he thus spoke he stalked across the room to Fred, intending at once to commence the work of grasping the Neville family.

"Get back," said Fred, retreating to the door.

"Is it that you fail to believe that I am your "bride's father?"

"I know not whose father you may be. Get "back."

"He is what he says he is," said the priest. "You should bear with him for a while."

"Where is Kate?" demanded Fred. It seemed as though, for the moment, he were full of courage. He looked round at Mrs. O'Hara, but nobody answered him. She was still standing with her eyes fixed upon the man, almost as though she thought that she could dart out upon him and destroy him. "Where is Kate?" he asked again. "Is she well?"

"Well enough to hide herself from her old "father," said the Captain, brushing a tear from his eye with the back of his hand.

"You shall see her presently, Mr. Neville," said the priest.

Then Neville whispered a word into the priest's ear. "What is it that the man "wants?"

"You need not regard that," said Father Marty.

"Mr. Marty," said the Captain, "you con- "cern yourself too closely in my affairs. I "prefer to open my thoughts and desires to "my son-in-law. He has taken measures "which give him a right to interfere in the "family. Ha, ha, ha."

"If you talk like that I'll stab you to the "heart," said Mrs. O'Hara, jumping forward. Then Fred Neville perceived that the woman had a dagger in her hand which she had hitherto concealed from him as she stood up against the wall behind the head of the sofa. He learnt afterwards that the priest, having heard in Liscannor of the man's arrival, had hurried up to the cottage, reaching it almost at

the same moment with the Captain. Kate had luckily at the moment been in her room and had not seen her father. She was still in her bed and was ill;—but during the scene that occurred afterwards she roused herself. But Mrs. O'Hara, even in the priest's presence, had at once seized the weapon from the drawer,—showing that she was prepared even for murder, had murder been found necessary by her for her relief. The man had immediately asked as to the condition of his daughter, and the mother had learned that her child's secret was known to all Liscannor. The priest now laid his hand upon her and stopped her, but he did it in all gentleness. "You'll have a fierce pig of a "mother-in-law, Mr. Neville," said the Captain, "but your wife's father,—you'll find him always "gentle and open to reason. You were asking "what I wanted."

"Had I not better give him money?" suggested Neville.

"No," said the priest shaking his head.

"Certainly," said Captain O'Hara.

"If you will leave this place at once," said Neville, "and come to me to-morrow morning at the Ennis barracks, I will give you money."

"Give him none," said Mrs. O'Hara.

"My beloved is unreasonable. You would "not be rid of me even were he to be so hard. "I should not die. Have I not proved to you "that I am one whom it is hard to destroy by "privation. The family has been under a "cloud. A day of sunshine has come with this "gallant young nobleman. Let me partake "the warmth. I will visit you, Mr. Neville, "certainly;—but what shall be the figure?"

"That will be as I shall find you then."

"I will trust you. I will come. The journey "hence to Ennis is long for one old as I am, "and would be lightened by so small a trifle "as—shall I say a bank note of the meanest "value." Upon this Neville handed him two bank notes for £1 each, and Captain O'Hara walked forth out of his wife's house.

"He will never leave you now," said the priest.

"He cannot hurt me. I will arrange with "some man of business to pay him a stipend as "long as he never troubles our friend here. "Though all the world should know it, will it "not be better so?"

Great and terrible is the power of money. When this easy way out of their immediate difficulties had been made by the rich man, even Mrs. O'Hara with all her spirit was subdued for the moment, and the reproaches of the priest were silenced for that hour. The young man had seemed to behave well, had stood up as the friend of the suffering women, and had been at any rate ready with his money. "And now," he said, "where is Kate?" Then Mrs. O'Hara took him by the hand and led him into the bedroom in which the poor girl had buried herself from her father's embrace. "Is he gone?" she asked before even she would throw herself into her lover's arms.

"Neville has paid him money," said the mother.

"Yes, he has gone," said Fred; "and I "think,—I think that he will trouble you no "more."

"Oh, Fred, oh, my darling, oh, my own "one. At last, at last you have come to me. "Why have you stayed away? You will not "stay away again? Oh, Fred, you do love "me? Say that you love me."

"Better than all the world," he said pressing her to his bosom.

He remained with her for a couple of hours, during which hardly a word was said to him about his marriage. So great had been the effect upon them all of the sudden presence of the Captain, and so excellent had been the service rendered them by the trust which the Captain had placed in the young man's wealth, that for this day both priest and mother were incapacitated from making their claim with the vigour and intensity of purpose which they

would have shewn had Captain O'Hara not presented himself at the cottage. The priest left them soon,—but not till it had been arranged that Neville should go back to Ennis to prepare for his reception of the Captain, and return to the cottage on the day after that interview was over. He assumed on a sudden the practical views of a man of business. He would take care to have an Ennis attorney with him when speaking to the Captain, and would be quite prepared to go to the extent of two hundred a year for the Captain's life, if the Captain could be safely purchased for that money. "A quarter of it would do," said Mrs. O'Hara. The priest thought £2 a week would be ample. "I'll be as good as my word," said Fred. Kate sat looking into his face thinking that he was still a god.

"And you will certainly be here by noon on "Sunday?" said Kate, clinging to him when he rose to go.

"Most certainly."

"Dear, dear Fred." And so he walked down the hill to the priest's house almost triumphantly. He thought himself fortunate in not finding the priest who had ridden off from Ardkill to some distant part of the parish; —and then drove himself back to Ennis.

CHAPTER V.

FRED NEVILLE IS AGAIN CALLED HOME TO SCROOPE.

NEVILLE was intent upon business, and had not been back in Ennis from the cottage half an hour before he obtained an introduction to an attorney. He procured it through the sergeant-major of the troop. The sergeant-major was intimate with the innkeeper, and the innkeeper was able to say that Mr. Thaddeus Crowe was an honest, intelligent, and peculiarly successful lawyer. Before he sat down to dinner Fred Neville was closeted at the barracks with Mr. Crowe.

He began by explaining to Mr. Crowe who he was. This he did in order that the attorney might know that he had the means of carrying

out his purpose. Mr. Crowe bowed, and assured his client that on that score he had no doubts whatever. Nevertheless Mr. Crowe's first resolve, when he heard of the earldom and of the golden prospects, was to be very careful not to pay any money out of his own pocket on behalf of the young officer, till he made himself quite sure that it would be returned to him with interest. As the interview progressed, however, Mr. Crowe began to see his way, and to understand that the golden prospects were not pleaded because the owner of them was himself short of cash. Mr. Crowe soon understood the whole story. He had heard of Captain O'Hara, and believed the man to be as thorough a blackguard as ever lived. When Neville told the attorney of the two ladies, and of the anxiety which he felt to screen them from the terrible annoyance of the Captain's visits, Mr. Crowe smiled, but made no remark. "It will be enough for you to know "that I am in earnest about it," said the future

Earl, resenting even the smile. Mr. Crowe bowed, and asked his client to finish the story. "The man is to be with me to-morrow, here, at "twelve, and I wish you to be present. Mr. "Crowe, my intention is to give him two hun- "dred pounds a year as long as he lives."

"Two hundred a year!" said the Ennis attorney, to whom such an annuity seemed to be exorbitant as the purchase-money for a returned convict.

"Yes;—I have already mentioned that sum "to his wife, though not to him."

"I should reconsider it, Mr. Neville."

"Thank you;—but I have made up my mind. "The payments will be made of course only "on condition that he troubles neither of the "ladies either personally or by letter. It might "be provided that it shall be paid to him "weekly in France, but will not be paid should "he leave that country. You will think of all "this, and will make suggestions to-morrow. I "shall be glad to have the whole thing left in

"your hands, so that I need simply remit the "cheques to you. Perhaps I shall have the "pleasure of seeing you to-morrow at twelve." Mr. Crowe promised to turn the matter over in his mind and to be present at the hour named. Neville carried himself very well through the interview, assuming with perfect ease the manners of the great and rich man who had only to give his orders with a certainty that they would be obeyed. Mr. Crowe, when he went out from the young man's presence, had no longer any doubt on his mind as to his client's pecuniary capability.

On the following day at twelve o'clock, Captain O'Hara, punctual to the minute, was at the barracks; and there also sitting in Neville's room, was the attorney. But Neville himself was not there, and the Captain immediately felt that he had been grossly imposed upon and swindled. "And who may I have the honour "of addressing, when I speak to you, sir?" demanded the Captain.

"I am a lawyer."

"And Mr. Neville,—my own son-in-law,—"
"has played me that trick!"

Mr. Crowe explained that no trick had been played, but did so in language which was no doubt less courteous than would have been used had Mr. Neville been present. As, however, the cause of our hero's absence is more important to us than the Captain's prospects that must be first explained.

As soon as the attorney left him Neville had sat down to dinner with his two brother officers, but was not by any means an agreeable companion. When they attempted to joke with him as to the young lady on the cliffs, he showed very plainly that he did not like it; and when Cornet Simpkinson after dinner raised his glass to drink a health to Miss O'Hara, Mr. Neville told him that he was an impertinent ass. It was then somewhat past nine, and it did not seem probable that the evening would go off pleasantly. Cornet Simpkinson lit his cigar,

and tried to wink at the Captain. Neville stretched out his legs and pretended to go to sleep. At this moment it was a matter of intense regret to him that he had ever seen the West of Ireland.

At a little before ten Captain Johnson retired, and the Cornet attempted an apology. He had not meant to say anything that Neville would not like. "It doesn't signify, my dear boy; "only as a rule, never mention women's names," said Neville, speaking as though he were fully fitted by his experience to lay down the law on a matter so delicate. "Perhaps one hadn't "better," said the Cornet,—and then that little difficulty was over. Cornet Simpkinson however thought of it all afterwards, and felt that that evening and that hour had been more important than any other evening or any other hour in his life.

At half-past ten, when Neville was beginning to think that he would take himself to bed, and was still cursing the evil star which had brought

him to County Clare, there arose a clatter at the outside gate of the small barrack-yard. A man had posted all the way down from Limerick and desired to see Mr. Neville at once. The man had indeed come direct from Scroope,—by rail from Dublin to Limerick, and thence without delay on to Ennis. The Earl of Scroope was dead, and Frederic Neville was Earl of Scroope. The man brought a letter from Miss Mellerby, telling him the sad news and conjuring him in his aunt's name to come at once to the Manor. Of course he must start at once for the Manor. Of course he must attend as first mourner at his uncle's grave before he could assume his uncle's name and fortune.

In that first hour of his greatness the shock to him was not so great but that he at once thought of the O'Haras. He would leave Ennis the following morning at six, so as to catch the day mail train out of Limerick for Dublin. That was a necessity; but though so very short a span of time was left to him, he

must still make arrangements about the O'Haras. He had hardly heard the news half an hour before he himself was knocking at the door of Mr. Crowe the attorney. He was admitted, and Mr. Crowe descended to him in a pair of slippers and a very old dressing-gown. Mr. Crowe, as he held his tallow candle up to his client's face, looked as if he didn't like it. "I "know I must apologize," said Neville, "but I "have this moment received news of my uncle's "death."

"The Earl?"

"Yes."

"And I have now the honour of—speaking "to the Earl of Scroope."

"Never mind that. I must start for England "almost immediately. I haven't above an hour "or two. You must see that man, O'Hara, "without me."

"Certainly, my lord."

"You shouldn't speak to me in that way "yet," said Neville angrily. "You will be good

"enough to understand that the terms are fixed;
"—two hundred a year as long as he remains
"in France and never molests anyone either
"by his presence or by letter. Thank you. I
"shall be so much obliged to you! I shall be
"back here after the funeral, and will arrange
"about payments. Good-night."

So it happened that Captain O'Hara had no opportunity on that occasion of seeing his proposed son-in-law. Mr. Crowe, fully crediting the power confided to him, did as he was bidden. He was very harsh to the poor Captain; but in such a condition a man can hardly expect that people should not be harsh to him. The Captain endeavoured to hold up his head, and to swagger, and to assume an air of pinchbeck respectability. But the attorney would not permit it. He required that the man should own himself to be penniless, a scoundrel, only anxious to be bought; and the Captain at last admitted the facts. The figure was the one thing important to him,—the figure and the

nature of the assurance. Mr. Crowe had made his calculations, and put the matter very plainly. A certain number of francs,—a hundred francs, —would be paid to him weekly at any town in France he might select,—which however would be forfeited by any letter written either to Mrs. O'Hara, to Miss O'Hara, or to the Earl.

"The Earl!" ejaculated the Captain.

Mr. Crowe had been unable to refrain his tongue from the delicious title, but now corrected himself. "Nor Mr. Neville, I mean. No one "will be bound to give you a farthing, and any "letter asking for anything more will forfeit "the allowance altogether." The Captain vainly endeavoured to make better terms, and of course accepted those proposed to him. He would live in Paris,—dear Paris. He took five pounds for his journey, and named an agent for the transmission of his money.

And so Fred Neville was the Earl of Scroope. He had still one other task to perform before he could make his journey home. He had to send

tidings in some shape to Ardkill of what had happened. As he returned to the barracks from Mr. Crowe's residence he thought wholly of this. That other matter was now arranged. As one item of the cost of his adventure in County Clare he must pay two hundred a year to that reprobate, the Captain, as long as the reprobate chose to live,—and must also pay Mr. Crowe's bill for his assistance. This was a small matter to him as his wealth was now great, and he was not a man by nature much prone to think of money. Nevertheless it was a bad beginning of his life. Though he had declared himself to be quite indifferent on that head, he did feel that the arrangement was not altogether reputable,—that it was one which he could not explain to his own man of business without annoyance, and which might perhaps give him future trouble. Now he must prepare his message for the ladies at Ardkill,—especially to the lady whom on his last visit to the cottage he had found armed with a dagger for the reception of her

husband. And as he returned back to the barracks it occurred to him that a messenger might be better than a letter. "Simpkinson," he said, going at once into the young man's bed-room, "have you heard what has happened to me?" Simpkinson had heard all about it, and expressed himself as "deucedly sorry" for the old man's death, but seemed to think that there might be consolation for that sorrow. "I must "go to Scroope immediately," said Neville. "I "have explained it all to Johnson, and shall "start almost at once. I shall first lie down "and get an hour's sleep. I want you to do "something for me." Simpkinson was devoted. Simpkinson would do anything. "I cut up a "little rough just now when you mentioned "Miss O'Hara's name." Simpkinson declared that he did not mind it in the least, and would never pronounce the name again as long as he lived. "But I want you to go and see her to-"morrow," said Neville. Then Simpkinson sat bolt upright in bed.

Of course the youthful warrior undertook the commission. What youthful warrior would not go any distance to see a beautiful young lady on a cliff, and what youthful warrior would not undertake any journey to oblige a brother officer who was an Earl? Full instructions were at once given to him. He had better ask to see Mrs. O'Hara,—in describing whom Neville made no allusion to the dagger. He was told how to knock at the door, and send in word by the servant to say that he had called on behalf of Mr. Neville. He was to drive as far as Liscannor, and then get some boy to accompany him on foot as a guide. He would not perhaps mind walking two or three miles. Simpkinson declared that were it ten he would not mind it. He was then to tell Mrs. O'Hara—just the truth. He was to say that a messenger had come from Scroope announcing the death of the Earl, and that Neville had been obliged to start at once for England.

"But you will be back?" said Simpkinson.

Neville paused a moment. "Yes, I shall be "back, but don't say anything of that to either "of the ladies."

"Must I say I don't know? They'll be sure "to ask, I should say."

"Of course they'll ask. Just tell them that "the whole thing has been arranged so quickly "that nothing has been settled, but that they "shall hear from me at once. You can say "that you suppose I shall be back, but that I "promised that I would write. Indeed that "will be the exact truth, as I don't at all know "what I may do. Be as civil to them as "possible."

"That's of course."

"They are ladies, you know."

"I supposed that."

"And I am most desirous to do all in my "power to oblige them. You can say that I "have arranged that other matter satisfac- "torily."

"That other matter?"

"They'll understand. The mother will at "least, and you'd better say that to her. You'll "go early."

"I'll start at seven if you like."

"Eight or nine will do. Thank you, "Simpkinson. I'm so much obliged to you. "I hope I shall see you over in England some "day when things are a little settled." With this Simpkinson was delighted,—as he was also with the commission entrusted to him.

And so Fred Neville was the Earl of Scroope. Not that he owned even to himself that the title and all belonging to it were as yet in his own possession. Till the body of the old man should be placed in the family vault he would still be simply Fred Neville, a lieutenant in Her Majesty's 20th Hussars. As he travelled home to Scroope, to the old gloomy mansion which was now in truth not only his home, but his own house, to do just as he pleased with it, he had much to fill his mind. He was himself astonished to find with how great a weight his

new dignities sat upon his shoulders, now that they were his own. But a few months since he had thought and even spoken of shifting them from himself to another, so that he might lightly enjoy a portion of the wealth which would belong to him without burdening himself with the duties of his position. He would take his yacht, and the girl he loved, and live abroad, with no present record of the coronet which would have descended to him, and with no assumption of the title. But already that feeling had died away within him. A few words spoken to him by the priest and a few serious thoughts within his own bosom had sufficed to explain to him that he must be the Earl of Scroope. The family honours had come to him, and he must support them,—either well or ill as his strength and principles might govern him. And he did understand that it was much to be a peer, an hereditary legislator, one who by the chance of his birth had a right to look for deferential respect

even from his elders. It was much to be the lord of wide acres, the ruler of a large domain, the landlord of many tenants who would at any rate regard themselves as dependent on his goodness. It was much to be so placed that no consideration of money need be a bar to any wish,—that the considerations which should bar his pleasures need be only those of dignity, character, and propriety. His uncle had told him more than once how much a peer of England owed to his country and to his order; —how such a one is bound by no ordinary bonds to a life of high resolves, and good endeavours. "Sans reproche" was the motto of his house, and was emblazoned on the wall of the hall that was now his own. If it might be possible to him he would live up to it and neither degrade his order nor betray his country.

But as he thought of all this, he thought also of Kate O'Hara. With what difficulties had he surrounded the commencement of this life which he purposed to lead! How was he to

escape from the mess of trouble which he had prepared for himself by his adventures in Ireland. An idea floated across his mind that very many men who stand in their natural manhood high in the world's esteem, have in their early youth formed ties such as that which now bound him to Kate O'Hara,—that they have been silly as he had been, and had then escaped from the effects of their folly without grievous damage. But yet he did not see his mode of escape. If money could do it for him he would make almost any sacrifice. If wealth and luxury could make his Kate happy, she should be happy as a Princess. But he did not believe either of her or of her mother that any money would be accepted as a sufficient atonement. And he hated himself for suggesting to himself that it might be possible. The girl was good, and had trusted him altogether. The mother was self-denying, devoted, and high-spirited. He knew that money would not suffice.

He need not return to Ireland unless he pleased. He could send over some agent to arrange his affairs, and allow the two women to break their hearts in their solitude upon the cliffs. Were he to do so he did not believe that they would follow him. They would write doubtless, but personally he might, probably, be quit of them in this fashion. But in this there would be a cowardice and a meanness which would make it impossible that he should ever again respect himself.

And thus he again entered Scroope, the lord and owner of all that he saw around him,—with by no means a happy heart or a light bosom.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EARL OF SCROOPE IS IN TROUBLE.

Not a word was said to the young lord on his return home respecting the O'Haras till he himself had broached the subject. He found his brother Jack Neville at Scroope on his arrival, and Sophie Mellerby was still staying with his aunt. A day had been fixed for the funeral, but no one had ventured to make any other arrangement till the heir and owner should be there. He was received with solemn respect by the old servants who, as he observed, abstained from calling him by any name. They knew that it did not become them to transfer the former lord's title to the heir till all that remained of the former lord should be hidden from the world in the family vault; but they could not bring

themselves to address a real Earl as Mr. Neville. His aunt was broken down by sorrow, but nevertheless, she treated him with a courtly deference. To her he was now the reigning sovereign among the Nevilles, and all Scroope and everything there was at his disposal. When he held her by the hand and spoke of her future life she only shook her head. "I am an old woman, "though not in years old as was my lord. But "my life is done, and it matters not where I go."

"Dear aunt, do not speak of going. Where "can you be so well as here?" But she only shook her head again and wept afresh. Of course it would not be fitting that she should remain in the house of the young Earl who was only her nephew by marriage. Scroope Manor would now become a house of joy, would be filled with the young and light of heart; there would be feasting there and dancing; horses neighing before the doors, throngs of carriages, new furniture, bright draperies, and perhaps, alas, loud revellings. It would not be fit that

such a one as she should be at Scroope now that her lord had left her.

The funeral was an affair not of pomp but of great moment in those parts. Two or three Nevilles from other counties came to the house, as did also sundry relatives bearing other names. Mr. Mellerby was there, and one or two of the late Earl's oldest friends; but the great gathering was made up of the Scroope tenants, not one of whom failed to see his late landlord laid in his grave. "My Lord," said an old man to Fred, one who was himself a peer and was the young lord's cousin though they two had never met before, "My Lord," said the old man, as soon as they had returned from the grave, "you are called upon to succeed as good a man "as ever it has been my lot to know. I loved "him as a brother. I hope you will not lightly "turn away from his example." Fred made some promise which at the moment he certainly intended to perform.

On the next morning the will was read.

There was nothing in it, nor could there have been anything in it, which might materially affect the interests of the heir. The late lord's widow was empowered to take away from Scroope anything that she desired. In regard to money she was provided for so amply that money did not matter to her. A whole year's income from the estates was left to the heir in advance, so that he might not be driven to any momentary difficulty in assuming the responsibilities of his station. A comparatively small sum was left to Jack Neville, and a special gem to Sophie Mellerby. There were bequests to all the servants, a thousand pounds to the vicar of the parish,—which perhaps was the only legacy which astonished the legatee,—and his affectionate love to every tenant on the estate. All the world acknowledged that it was as good a will as the Earl could have made. Then the last of the strangers left the house, and the Earl of Scroope was left to begin his reign and do his duty as best he might.

Jack had promised to remain with him for a few days, and Sophie Mellerby, who had altogether given up her London season, was to stay with the widow till something should be settled as to a future residence. "If my aunt will only "say that she will keep the house for a couple "of years, she shall have it," said Fred to the young lady,—perhaps wishing to postpone for so long a time the embarrassment of the large domain; but to this Lady Scroope would not consent. If allowed she would remain till the end of July. By that time she would find herself a home.

"For the life of me, I don't know how to "begin my life," said the new peer to his brother as they were walking about the park together.

"Do not think about beginning it at all. "You won't be angry, and will know what "I mean, when I say that you should avoid "thinking too much of your own posi-"tion."

"How am I to help thinking of it? It is so "entirely changed from what it was."

"No Fred,—not entirely; nor as I hope, "is it changed at all in those matters which "are of most importance to you. A man's self, "and his ideas of the manner in which he "should rule himself, should be more to him "than any outward accidents. Had that cousin "of ours never died——"

"I almost wish he never had."

"It would then have been your ambition to "live as an honourable gentleman. To be that "now should be more to you than to be an Earl "and a man of fortune."

"It's very easy to preach, Jack. You were "always good at that. But here I am, and "what am I to do? How am I to begin? "Everybody says that I am to change nothing. "The tenants will pay their rents, and Burnaby "will look after things outside, and Mrs. Bunce "will look after the things inside, and I may "sit down and read a novel. When the gloom

"of my uncle's death has passed away, I suppose "I shall buy a few more horses and perhaps "begin to make a row about the pheasants. I "don't know what else there is to do."

"You'll find that there are duties."

"I suppose I shall. Something is expected "of me. I am to keep up the honour of the "family; but it really seems to me that the "best way of doing so would be to sit in "my uncle's arm chair and go to sleep as he "did."

"As a first step in doing something you "should get a wife for yourself. If once you "had a settled home, things would arrange "themselves round you very easily."

"Ah, yes;—a wife. You know, Jack, I told "you about that girl in County Clare."

"You must let nothing of that kind stand in "your way."

"Those are your ideas of high moral grandeur! "Just now my own personal conduct was to be "all in all to me, and the rank nothing. Now

"I am to desert a girl I love because I am an "English peer."

"What has passed between you and the "young lady, of course I do not know."

"I may as well tell you the whole truth," said Fred. And he told it. He told it honestly,—almost honestly. It is very hard for a man to tell a story truly against himself, but he intended to tell the whole truth. "Now "what must I do? Would you have me marry "her?" Jack Neville paused for a long time. "At any rate you can say yes, or no."

"It is very hard to say yes, or no."

"I can marry no one else. I can see my way "so far. You had better tell Sophie Mellerby "everything, and then a son of yours shall be "the future Earl."

"We are both of us young as yet, Fred, and "need not think of that. If you do mean to "marry Miss O'Hara you should lose not a "day;—not a day."

"But what if I don't. You are always very

"ready with advice, but you have given me none "as yet."

"How can I advise you? I should have "heard the very words in which you made your "promise before I could dare to say whether it "should be kept or broken. As a rule a man "should keep his word."

"Let the consequences be what they may?"

"A man should keep his word certainly. "And I know no promise so solemn as that "made to a woman when followed by conduct "such as yours has been."

"And what will people say then as to my "conduct to the family? How will they look "on me when I bring home the daughter of "that scoundrel?"

"You should have thought of that before."

"But I was not told. Do you not see that I "was deceived there. Mrs. O'Hara clearly said "that the man was dead. And she told me "nothing of the galleys."

"How could she tell you that?"

"But if she has deceived me, how can I be "expected to keep my promise? I love the "girl dearly. If I could change places with "you, I would do so this very minute, and "take her away with me, and she should "certainly be my wife. If it were only myself, "I would give up all to her. I would, by "heaven. But I cannot sacrifice the family. "As to solemn promises, did I not swear to my "uncle that I would not disgrace the family "by such a marriage? Almost the last word "that I spoke to him was that. Am I to be "untrue to him? There are times in which "it seems impossible that a man should do "right."

"There are times in which a man may be "too blind to see the right," said Jack,—sparing his brother in that he did not remind him that those dilemmas always come from original wrong-doing.

"I think I am resolved not to marry her," said Fred.

"If I were in your place I think I should "marry her," said Jack;—"but I will not speak "with certainty even of myself."

"I shall not. But I will be true to her all "the same. You may be sure that I shall not "marry at all." Then he recurred to his old scheme. "If I can find any mode of marrying "her in some foreign country, so that her son "and mine shall not be the legitimate heir to "the title and estates, I would go there at once "with her, though it were to the further end "of the world. You can understand now what "I mean when I say that I do not know how "to begin." Jack acknowledged that in that matter he did understand his brother. It is always hard for a man to commence any new duty when he knows that he has a millstone round his neck which will probably make that duty impracticable at last.

He went on with his life at Scroope for a week after the funeral without resolving upon anything, or taking any steps towards solving

the O'Hara difficulty. He did ride about among the tenants, and gave some trifling orders as to the house and stables. His brother was still with him, and Miss Mellerby remained at the Manor. But he knew that the thunder-cloud must break over his head before long, and at last the storm was commenced. The first drops fell upon him in the soft form of a letter from Kate O'Hara.

"DEAREST FRED,

"I am not quite sure that I ought to "address you like that; but I always shall "unless you tell me not. We have been ex- "pecting a letter from you every day since you "went. Your friend from Ennis came here, "and brought us the news of your uncle's death. "We were very sorry; at least I was certainly. "I liked to think of you a great deal better as "my own Fred, than as a great lord. But "you will still be my own Fred always; will "you not?

"Mother said at once that it was a matter of "course that you should go to England; but "your friend, whose name we never heard, said "that you had sent him especially to promise "that you would write quite immediately, and "that you would come back very soon. I do "not know what he will think of me, because "I asked him whether he was quite, quite sure "that you would come back. If he thinks that "I love you better than my own soul, he only "thinks the truth.

"Pray,—pray write at once. Mother is get-"ting vexed because there is no letter. I am "never vexed with my own darling love, but I "do so long for a letter. If you knew how "I felt, I do think you would write almost "every day,—if it were only just one short "word. If you would say, 'Dear Love,' that "would be enough. And pray come. Oh do, "do, pray come! Cannot you think how I "must long to see you! The gentleman who "came here said that you would come, and I

"know you will. But pray come soon. Think, "now, how you are all the world to me. You "are more than all the world to me.

"I am not ill as I was when you were here. "But I never go outside the door now. I "never shall go outside the door again till "you come. I don't care now for going out "upon the rocks. I don't care even for the "birds as you are not here to watch them "with me. I sit with the skin of the seal "you gave me behind my head, and I pretend "to sleep. But though I am quite still for "hours I am not asleep, but thinking always of "you.

"We have neither seen or heard anything "more of my father, and Father Marty says "that you have managed about that very "generously. You are always generous and "good. I was so wretched all that day, that "I thought I should have died. You will "not think ill of your Kate, will you, because "her father is bad?

"Pray write when you get this, and above "all things let us know when you will come "to us.

"Always, always, and always,

"Your own

"KATE."

Two days after this, while the letter was still unanswered, there came another from Mrs. O'Hara which was, if possible, more grievous to him than that from her daughter.

"My Lord," the letter began. When he read this he turned from it with a sickening feeling of disgust. Of course the woman knew that he was now Earl of Scroope; but it would have been so desirable that there should have been no intercourse between her and him except under the name by which she had hitherto known him. And then in the appellation as she used it there seemed to be a determination to reproach him which must, he knew, lead to great misery.

"My Lord,

"The messenger you sent to us "brought us good news, and told us that you "were gone home to your own affairs. That "I suppose was right, but why have you not "written to us before this? Why have you "not told my poor girl that you will come to "her, and atone to her for the injury you "have done in the only manner now possible? "I cannot and do not believe that you intend "to evade the solemn promises that you have "made her, and allow her to remain here a "ruined outcast, and the mother of your child. "I have thought you to be both a gentleman "and a christian, and I still think so. Most "assuredly you would be neither were you "disposed to leave her desolate, while you are "in prosperity.

"I call upon you, my lord, in the most "solemn manner, with all the energy and "anxiety of a mother,—of one who will be "of all women the most broken-hearted if

"you wrong her,—to write at once and let "me know when you will be here to keep "your promise. For the sake of your own "offspring I implore you not to delay.

"We feel under deep obligations to you "for what you did in respect of that unhappy "man. We have never for a moment doubted "your generosity.

"Yours, My Lord,

"With warmest affection, if you will admit it,

"C. O'HARA.

"P.S. I ask you to come at once and keep "your word. Were you to think of break-"ing it, I would follow you through the "world."

The young Earl, when he received this, was not at a loss for a moment to attribute the body of Mrs. O'Hara's letter to Father Marty's power of composition, and the postscript to the unaided effort of the lady herself. Take

it as he might—as coming from Mrs. O'Hara or from the priest,—he found the letter to be a great burden to him. He had not as yet answered the one received from Kate, as to the genuineness of which he had entertained no doubt. How should he answer such letters? Some answer must of course be sent, and must be the forerunner of his future conduct. But how should he write his letter when he had not as yet resolved what his conduct should be?

He did attempt to write a letter, not to either of the ladies, but to the priest, explaining that in the ordinary sense of the word he could not and would not marry Miss O'Hara, but that in any way short of that legitimate and usual mode of marriage, he would bind himself to her, and that when so bound he would be true to her for life. He would make any settlement that he, Father Marty, might think right either upon the mother or upon the daughter. But Countess

of Scroope the daughter of that Captain O'Hara should not become through his means. Then he endeavoured to explain the obligation laid upon him by his uncle, and the excuse which he thought he could plead in not having been informed of Captain O'Hara's existence. But the letter when written seemed to him to be poor and mean, cringing and at the same time false. He told himself that it would not suffice. It was manifest to him that he must go back to County Clare, even though he should encounter Mrs. O'Hara, dagger in hand. What was any personal danger to himself in such an affair as this? And if he did not fear a woman's dagger, was he to fear a woman's tongue,—or the tongue of a priest? So he tore the letter, and resolved that he would write and name a day on which he would appear at Ardkill. At any rate such a letter as that might be easily written, and might be made soft with words of love.

"DEAREST KATE,

"I will be with you on the 15th or "on the 16th at latest. You should remember "that a man has a good deal to do and think "of when he gets pitchforked into such a new "phase of life as mine. Do not, however, "think that I quarrel with you, my darling. "That I will never do. My love to your "mother.

"Ever your own,

"FRED."

"I hate signing the other name."

This letter was not only written but sent.

CHAPTER VII.

SANS REPROCHE.

THREE or four days after writing his letter to Kate O'Hara, the Earl told his aunt that he must return to Ireland, and he named the day on which he would leave Scroope. "I did not "think that you would go back there," she said. He could see by the look of her face and by the anxious glance of her eye that she had in her heart the fear of Kate O'Hara,—as he had also.

"I must return. I came away at a moment's "notice."

"But you have written about leaving the "regiment."

"Yes;—I have done that. In the peculiar "circumstances I don't suppose they will want "me to serve again. Indeed I've had a letter,

"just a private note, from one of the fellows at "the Horse Guards explaining all that."

"I don't see why you should go at all;— "indeed I do not."

"What am I to do about my things? I owe "some money. I've got three or four horses "there. My very clothes are all about just as I "left them when I came away."

"Any body can manage all that. Give the "horses away."

"I had rather not give away my horses," he said laughing. "The fact is I must go." She could urge nothing more to him on that occasion. She did not then mention the existence of Kate O'Hara. But he knew well that she was thinking of the girl, and he knew also that the activity of Lady Mary Quin had not slackened. But his aunt, he thought, was more afraid of him now that he was the Earl than she had been when he was only the heir; and it might be that this feeling would save him from the mention of Kate O'Hara's name.

To some extent the dowager was afraid of her nephew. She knew at least that the young man was all-powerful and might act altogether as he listed. In whatever she might say she could not now be supported by the authority of the Lord of Scroope. He himself was lord of Scroope; and were he to tell her simply to hold her tongue and mind her own business she could only submit. But she was not the woman to allow any sense of fear, or any solicitude as to the respect due to herself, to stand in the way of the performance of a duty. It may be declared on her behalf that had it been in her nephew's power to order her head off in punishment for her interference, she would still have spoken had she conceived it to be right to speak.

But within her own bosom there had been dreadful conflicts as to that duty. Lady Mary Quin had by no means slackened her activity. Lady Mary Quin had learned the exact condition of Kate O'Hara, and had sent the news to

her friend with greedy rapidity. And in sending it Lady Mary Quin entertained no slightest doubt as to the duty of the present Earl of Scroope. According to her thinking it could not be the duty of an Earl of Scroope in any circumstances to marry a Kate O'Hara. There are women, who in regard to such troubles as now existed at Ardhill cottage, always think that the woman should be punished as the sinner and that the man should be assisted to escape. The hardness of heart of such women, —who in all other views of life are perhaps tender and soft-natured,—is one of the marvels of our social system. It is as though a certain line were drawn to include all women,—a line, but, alas, little more than a line,—by overstepping which, or rather by being known to have overstepped it, a woman ceases to be a woman in the estimation of her own sex. That the existence of this feeling has strong effect in saving women from passing the line, none of us can doubt. That its general tendency may be

good rather than evil, is possible. But the hardness necessary to preserve the rule, a hardness which must be exclusively feminine but which is seldom wanting, is a marvellous feature in the female character. Lady Mary Quin probably thought but little on the subject. The women in the cottage on the cliff, who were befriended by Father Marty, were to her dangerous scheming Roman Catholic adventurers. The proper triumph of Protestant virtue required that they should fail in their adventures. She had always known that there would be something disreputable heard of them sooner or later. When the wretched Captain came into the neighbourhood,—and she soon heard of his coming,—she was gratified by feeling that her convictions had been correct. When the sad tidings as to poor Kate reached her ears, she had "known that it would be "so." That such a girl should be made Countess of Scroope in reward for her wickedness would be to her an event horrible, almost con-

trary to Divine Providence,—a testimony that the Evil One was being allowed peculiar power at the moment, and would no doubt have been used in her own circles to show the ruin that had been brought upon the country by Catholic emancipation. She did not for a moment doubt that the present Earl should be encouraged to break any promises of marriage to the making of which he might have been allured.

But it was not so with Lady Scroope. She, indeed, came to the same conclusion as her friend, but she did so with much difficulty and after many inward struggles. She understood and valued the customs of the magic line. In her heart of hearts she approved of a different code of morals for men and women. That which merited instant, and as regarded this world, perpetual condemnation in a woman, might in a man be very easily forgiven. A sigh, a shake of the head, and some small innocent stratagem that might lead to a happy marriage and settlement in life with increased

income, would have been her treatment of such sin for the heirs of the great and wealthy. She knew that the world could not afford to ostracise the men,—though happily it might condemn the women. Nevertheless, when she came to the single separated instance, though her heart melted with no ruth for the woman,—in such cases the woman must be seen before the ruth is felt,—though pity for Kate O'Hara did not influence her, she did acknowledge the sanctity of a gentleman's word. If, as Lady Mary told her, and as she could so well believe, the present Earl of Scroope had given to this girl a promise that he would marry her, if he had bound himself by his pledged word, as a nobleman and a gentleman, how could she bid him become a perjured knave? Sans reproche! Was he thus to begin to live and to deserve the motto of his house by the conduct of his life?

But then the evil that would be done was so great! She did not for a moment doubt all that Lady Mary told her about the girl. The worst

of it had indeed been admitted. She was a Roman Catholic, ill-born, ill-connected, damaged utterly by a parent so low that nothing lower could possibly be raked out of the world's gutters. And now the girl herself was—a castaway. Such a marriage as that of which Lady Mary spoke would not only injure the house of Scroope for the present generation, but would tend to its final downfall. Would it not be known throughout all England that the next Earl of Scroope would be the grandson of a convict? Might there not be questions as to the legitimacy of the assumed heir? She herself knew of noble families which had been scattered, confounded, and almost ruined by such imprudence. Hitherto the family of Scroope had been continued from generation to generation without stain,—almost without stain. It had felt it to be a fortunate thing that the late heir had died because of the pollution of his wretched marriage. And now must evil as bad befall it, worse evil perhaps, through the folly of this young man? Must

that proud motto be taken down from its place in the hall from very shame? But the evil had not been done yet, and it might be that her words could save the house from ruin and disgrace.

She was a woman of whom it may be said that whatever difficulty she might have in deciding a question she could recognise the necessity of a decision and could abide by it when she had made it. It was with great difficulty that she could bring herself to think that an Earl of Scroope should be false to a promise by which he had seduced a woman, but she did succeed in bringing herself to such thought. Her very heart bled within her as she acknowledged the necessity. A lie to her was abominable. A lie, to be told by herself, would have been hideous to her. A lie to be told by him, was worse. As virtue, what she called virtue, was the one thing indispensable to women, so was truth the one thing indispensable to men. And yet she must tell him to lie, and

having resolved so to tell him, must use all her intellect to defend the lie, — and to insist upon it.

He was determined to return to Ireland, and there was nothing that she could do to prevent his return. She could not bid him shun a danger simply because it was a danger. He was his own master, and were she to do so he would only laugh at her. Of authority with him she had none. If she spoke, he must listen. Her position would secure so much to her from courtesy,—and were she to speak of the duty which he owed to his name and to the family he could hardly laugh. She therefore sent to him a message. Would he kindly go to her in her own room? Of course he attended to her wishes and went. "You mean to leave us "to-morrow, Fred," she said. We all know the peculiar solemnity of a widow's dress,—the look of self-sacrifice on the part of the woman which the dress creates; and have perhaps recognised the fact that if the woman be

deterred by no necessities of œconomy in her toilet,—as in such material circumstances the splendour is more perfect if splendour be the object,—so also is the self-sacrifice more abject. And with this widow an appearance of melancholy solemnity, almost of woe, was natural to her. She was one whose life had ever been serious, solemn, and sad. Wealth and the outward pomp of circumstances had conferred upon her a certain dignity; and with that doubtless there had reached her some feeling of satisfaction. Religion too had given her comfort, and a routine of small duties had saved her from the wretchedness of ennui. But life with her had had no laughter, and had seldom smiled. Now in the first days of her widowhood she regarded her course as run, and looked upon herself as one who, in speaking almost, spoke from the tomb. All this had its effect upon the young lord. She did inspire him with a certain awe; and though her weeds gave her no authority, they did give her weight.

"Yes; I shall start to-morrow," he replied.

"And you still mean to go to Ireland?"

"Yes;—I must go to Ireland. I shan't stay "there, you know."

Then she paused a moment before she proceeded. "Shall you see—that young woman "when you are there?"

"I suppose I shall see her."

"Pray do not think that I desire to interfere "with your private affairs. I know well that I "have no right to assume over you any of that "affectionate authority which a mother might "have,—though in truth I love you as a son."

"I would treat you just as I would my own "mother."

"No, Fred; that cannot be so. A mother "would throw her arms round you and cling to "you if she saw you going into danger. A "mother would follow you, hoping that she "might save you."

"But there is no danger."

"Ah, Fred, I fear there is."

"What danger?"

"You are now the head of one of the oldest "and the noblest families in this which in my "heart I believe to be the least sinful among "the sinful nations of the wicked world."

"I don't quite know how that may be;—I "mean about the world. Of course I under- "stand about the family."

"But you love your country?"

"Oh yes. I don't think there's any place "like England,—to live in."

"And England is what it is because there are "still some left among us who are born to high "rank and who know how to live up to the "standard that is required of them. If ever "there was such a man, your uncle was such a "one."

"I'm sure he was;—just what he ought to "have been."

"Honourable, true, affectionate, self-denying, "affable to all men, but ever conscious of his rank, giving much because much had been

"given to him, asserting his nobility for the "benefit of those around him, proud of his "order for the sake of his country, bearing his "sorrows with the dignity of silence, a nobleman "all over, living on to the end sans reproche! "He was a man whom you may dare to imitate, "though to follow him may be difficult." She spoke not loudly, but clearly, looking him full in the face as she stood motionless before him.

"He was all that," said Fred, almost overpowered by the sincere solemnity of his aunt's manner.

"Will you try to walk in his footsteps?"

"Two men can never be like one another in "that way. I shall never be what he was. "But I'll endeavour to get along as well as I "can."

"You will remember your order?"

"Yes, I will. I do remember it. Mind you, "aunt, I am not glad that I belong to it. I "think I do understand about it all, and will "do my best. But Jack would have made a

"better Earl than I shall do. That's the "truth."

"The Lord God has placed you,—and you "must pray to Him that He will enable you to "do your duty in that state of life to which it "has pleased Him to call you. You are here "and must bear his decree; and whether it be "a privilege to enjoy, you must enjoy it, or a "burden to bear, you must endure it."

"It is so of course."

"Knowing that, you must know also how "incumbent it is upon you not to defile the "stock from which you are sprung."

"I suppose it has been defiled," said Fred, who had been looking into the history of the family. "The ninth Earl seems to have "married nobody knows whom. And his son "was my uncle's grandfather."

This was a blow to Lady Scroope, but she bore it with dignity and courage. "You would "hardly wish it to be said that you had copied "the only one of your ancestors who did amiss.

"The world was rougher then than it is now,
"and he of whom you speak was a soldier."

"I'm a soldier too," said the Earl.

"Oh, Fred, is it thus you answer me! He
"was a soldier in rough times, when there were
"wars. I think he married when he was with
"the army under Marlborough."

"I have not seen anything of that kind, cer-
"tainly."

"Your country is at peace, and your place is
"here, among your tenantry, at Scroope. You
"will promise me, Fred, that you will not marry
"this girl in Ireland?"

"If I do, the fault will be all with that old
"maid at Castle Quin."

"Do not say that, Fred. It is impossible.
"Let her conduct have been what it may, it
"cannot make that right in you which would
"have been wrong, or that wrong which would
"have been right."

"She's a nasty meddlesome cat."

"I will not talk about her. What good

"would it do? You cannot at any rate be "surprised at my extreme anxiety. You did "promise your uncle most solemnly that you "would never marry this young lady."

"If I did, that ought to be enough." He was now waxing angry and his face was becoming red. He would bear a good deal from his uncle's widow, but he felt his own power and was not prepared to bear much more.

"Of course I cannot bind you. I know well "how impotent I am,—how powerless to exer- "cise control. But I think, Fred, that for your "uncle's sake you will not refuse to repeat your "promise to me, if you intend to keep it. Why "is it that I am so anxious? It is for your "sake, and for the sake of a name which should "be dearer to you than it is even to me."

"I have no intention of marrying at all."

"Do not say that."

"I do say it. I do not want to keep either "you or Jack in the dark as to my future life. "This young lady,—of whom, by the by, neither

"you nor Lady Mary Quin know anything, "shall not become Countess of Scroope. To "that I have made up my mind."

"Thank God."

"But as long as she lives I will make no "woman Countess of Scroope. Let Jack marry "this girl that he is in love with. They shall "live here and have the house to themselves if "they like it. He will look after the property "and shall have whatever income old Mellerby "thinks proper. I will keep the promise I "made to my uncle,—but the keeping of it will "make it impossible for me to live here. I "would prefer now that you should say no more "on the subject." Then he left her, quitting the room with some stateliness in his step, as though conscious that at such a moment as this it behoved him to assume his rank.

The dowager sat alone all that morning thinking of the thing she had done. She did now believe that he was positively resolved not to marry Kate O'Hara, and she believed also that

she herself had fixed him in that resolution. In doing so had she or had she not committed a deadly sin? She knew almost with accuracy what had occurred on the coast of Clare. A young girl, innocent herself up to that moment, had been enticed to her ruin by words of love which had been hallowed in her ears by vows of marriage. Those vows which had possessed so deadly an efficacy, were now to be simply broken! The cruelty to her would be damnable, devilish,—surely worthy of hell if any sin of man can be so called! And she, who could not divest herself of a certain pride taken in the austere morality of her own life, she who was now a widow anxious to devote her life solely to God, had persuaded the man to this sin, in order that her successor as Countess of Scroope might not be, in her opinion, unfitting for nobility! The young lord had promised her that he would be guilty of this sin, so damnable, so devilish, telling her as he did so, that as a consequence of his promise he must continue to live a life of

wickedness! In the agony of her spirit she threw herself upon her knees and implored the Lord to pardon her and to guide her. But even while kneeling before the throne of heaven she could not drive the pride of birth out of her heart. That the young Earl might be saved from the damning sin and also from the polluting marriage;—that was the prayer she prayed.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOOSE ABOUT THE WORLD.

The Countess was seen no more on that day, —was no more seen at least by either of the two brothers. Miss Mellerby was with her now and again, but on each occasion only for a few minutes, and reported that Lady Scroope was ill and could not appear at dinner. She would, however, see her nephew before he started on the following morning.

Fred himself was much affected by the interview with his aunt. No doubt he had made a former promise to his uncle, similar to that which had now been exacted from him. No doubt he had himself resolved, after what he had thought to be mature consideration that he would not marry the girl, justifying to himself

this decision by the deceit which he thought had been practised upon him in regard to Captain O'Hara. Nevertheless, he felt that by what had now occurred he was bound more strongly against the marriage than he had ever been bound before. His promise to his uncle might have been regarded as being obligatory only as long as his uncle lived. His own decision he would have been at liberty to change when he pleased to do so. But, though his aunt was almost nothing to him,—was not in very truth his aunt, but only the widow of his uncle, there had been a solemnity about the engagement as he had now made it with her, which he felt to be definitely binding. He must go to Ardkill prepared to tell them absolutely the truth. He would make any arrangement they pleased as to their future joint lives, so long as it was an arrangement by which Kate should not become Countess of Scroope. He did not attempt to conceal from himself the dreadful nature of the task before him. He knew what would be the

indignation of the priest. He could picture to himself the ferocity of the mother, defending her young as a lioness would her whelp. He could imagine that that dagger might again be brought from its hiding place. And, worse than all, he would see the girl prostrate in her woe, and appealing to his love and to his oaths, when the truth as to her future life should be revealed to her. But yet he did not think of shunning the task before him. He could not endure to live a coward in his own esteem.

He was unlike himself and very melancholy. "It has been so good of you to remain here," he said to Sophie Mellerby. They had now become intimate and almost attached to each other as friends. If she had allowed a spark of hope to become bright within her heart in regard to the young Earl that had long since been quenched. She had acknowledged to herself that had it been possible in other respects they would not have suited each other,—and now they were friends.

"I love your aunt dearly and have been very "glad to be with her."

"I wish you would learn to love somebody "else dearly."

"Perhaps I shall, some day,—somebody else; "though I don't at all know who it may be."

"You know whom I mean."

"I suppose I do."

"And why not love him? Isn't he a good "fellow?"

"One can't love all the good fellows, Lord "Scroope."

"You'll never find a better one than he is."

"Did he commission you to speak for him?"

"You know he didn't. You know that he "would be the last man in the world to do so?"

"I was surprised."

"But I had a reason for speaking."

"No doubt."

"I don't suppose it will have any effect with "you;—but it is something you ought to know. "If any man of my age can be supposed to

"have made up his mind on such a matter, you "may believe that I have made up my mind "that I will—never marry."

"What nonsense, Lord Scroope."

"Well;—yes; perhaps it is. But I am so "convinced of it myself that I shall ask my "brother to come and live here—permanently, "—as master of the place. As he would have "to leave his regiment it would of course be "necessary that his position here should be "settled,—and it shall be settled."

"I most sincerely hope that you will always "live here yourself."

"It won't suit me. Circumstances have "made it impossible. If he will not do so, nor "my aunt, the house must be shut up. I am "most anxious that this should not be done. I "shall implore him to remain here, and to be "here exactly as I should have been,—had things "with me not have been so very unfortunate. "He will at any rate have a house to offer you, "if ——"

"Lord Scroope!"

"I know what you are going to say, Sophie."

"I don't know that I am as yet disposed to "marry for the sake of a house to shelter me."

"Of course you would say that; but still I "think that I have been right to tell you. I am "sure you will believe my assurance that Jack "knows nothing of all this."

That same evening he said nearly the same thing to his brother, though in doing so he made no special allusion to Sophie Mellerby. "I know "that there is a great deal that a fellow should "do, living in such a house as this, but I am "not the man to do it. It's a very good kind "of life, if you happen to be up to it. I am "not, but you are."

"My dear Fred, you can't change the accidents "of birth."

"In a great measure I can; or at least we "can do so between us. You can't be Lord "Scroope, but you can be master of Scroope "Manor."

"No I can't;—and, which is more, I won't. "Don't think I am uncivil."

"You are uncivil, Jack."

"At any rate I am not ungrateful. I only "want you to understand thoroughly that such "an arrangement is out of the question. In no "condition of life would I care to be the locum "tenens for another man. You are now five or "six and twenty. At thirty you may be a "married man with an absolute need for your "own house."

"I would execute any deed."

"So that I might be enabled to keep the "owner of the property out of the only place "that is fit for him! It is a power which I "should not use, and do not wish to possess. "Believe me, Fred, that a man is bound to "submit himself to the circumstances by which "he is surrounded, when it is clear that they "are beneficial to the world at large. There "must be an Earl of Scroope, and you at present "are the man."

They were sitting together out upon the terrace after dinner, and for a time there was silence. His brother's arguments were too strong for the young lord, and it was out of his power to deal with one so dogmatic. But he did not forget the last words that had been spoken. It may be that "I shall not be the "man very long," he said at last.

"Any of us may die to-day or to-morrow," said Jack.

"I have a kind of presentiment,—not that I "shall die, but that I shall never see Scroope "again. It seems as though I were certainly "leaving for ever a place that has always been "distasteful to me."

"I never believe anything of presentiments."

"No; of course not. You're not that sort "of fellow at all. But I am. I can't think of "myself as living here with a dozen old fogies "about the place all doing nothing, touching "their hats, my-lording me at every turn, look-"ing respectable, but as idle as pickpockets."

"You'll have to do it."

"Perhaps I shall, but I don't think it." Then there was again silence for a time. "The "less said about it the better, but I know that "I've got a very difficult job before me in "Ireland."

"I don't envy you, Fred;—not that."

"It is no use talking about it. It has got "to be done, and the sooner done the better. "What I shall do when it is done, I have not "the most remote idea. Where I shall be "living this day month I cannot guess. I can "only say one thing certainly, and that is that "I shall not come back here. There never was "a fellow so loose about the world as I am."

It was terrible that a young man who had it in his power to do so much good or so much evil should have had nothing to bind him to the better course! There was the motto of his house, and the promises which he had made to his uncle persuading him to that which was respectable and as he thought dull; and opposed

to those influences there was an unconquerable feeling on his own part that he was altogether unfitted for the kind of life that was expected of him. Joined to this there was the fact of that unfortunate connection in Ireland from which he knew that it would be base to fly, and which, as it seemed to him, made any attempt at respectability impossible to him.

Early on the following morning, as he was preparing to start, his aunt again sent for him. She came out to him in the sitting-room adjoining her bedroom and there embraced him. Her eyes were red with weeping, and her face wan with care. "Fred," she said; "dear Fred."

"Good-bye, aunt. The last word I have to "say is that I implore you not to leave Scroope "as long as you are comfortable here."

"You will come back?"

"I cannot say anything certain about that."

She still had hold of him with both hands and was looking into his face with loving, frightened, wistful eyes. "I know," she said, "that you

"will be thinking of what passed between us "yesterday."

"Certainly I shall remember it."

"I have been praying for you, Fred; and "now I tell you to look to your Father which is "in Heaven for guidance, and not to take it "from any poor frail sinful human being. Ask "Him to keep your feet steady in the path, and "your heart pure, and your thoughts free from "wickedness. Oh, Fred, keep your mind and "body clear before Him, and if you will kneel "to Him for protection, He will show you a "way through all difficulties." It was thus that she intended to tell him that his promise to her, made on the previous day, was to count for nought, and that he was to marry the girl if by no other way he could release himself from vice. But she could not bring herself to declare to him in plain terms that he had better marry Kate O'Hara, and bring his new Countess to Scroope in order that she might be fitly received by her predecessor. It might be that

the Lord would still show him a way out of the two evils.

But his brother was more clear of purpose with him, as they walked together out to the yard in which the young Earl was to get into his carriage. "Upon the whole, Fred, if I were "you I should marry that girl." This he said quite abruptly. The young lord shook his head. "It may be that I do not know all the circum- "stances. If they be as I have heard them from "you, I should marry her. Good-bye. Let me "hear from you, when you have settled as to "going anywhere."

"I shall be sure to write," said Fred as he took the reins and seated him in the phaeton.

His brother's advice he understood plainly, and that of his aunt he thought that he understood. But he shook his head again as he told himself that he could not now be guided by either of them.

CHAPTER IX.

AT LISCANNOR.

THE young lord slept one night at Ennis, and on the third morning after his departure from Scroope, started in his gig for Liscannor and the cliffs of Moher. He took a servant with him and a change of clothes. And as he went his heart was very heavy. He could not live a coward in his own esteem. Were it not so how willingly would he have saved himself from the misery of this journey, and have sent to his Kate to bid her come to him in England! He feared the priest, and he feared his Kate's mother;—not her dagger, but her eyes and scorching words. He altogether doubted his own powers to perform satisfactorily the task before him. He knew men who could do it.

His brother Jack would do it, were it possible that his brother Jack should be in such a position. But for himself, he was conscious of a softness of heart, a feminine tenderness, which,—to do him justice,—he did not mistake for sincerity, that rendered him unfit for the task before him. The farther he journeyed from Scroope and the nearer that he found himself to the cliffs the stronger did the feeling grow within him, till it had become almost tragical in its dominion over him. But still he went on. It was incumbent on him to pay one more visit to the cliffs and he journeyed on.

At Limerick he did not even visit the barracks to see his late companions of the regiment. At Ennis he slept in his old room, and of course the two officers who were quartered there came to him. But they both declared when they left him that the Earl of Scroope and Fred Neville were very different persons, attributing the difference solely to the rank and wealth of the new peer. Poor Simpkinson had expected long whispered

confidential conversations respecting the ladies of Ardkill; but the Earl had barely thanked him for his journey; and the whispered confidence, which would have been so delightful, was at once impossible. "By Heaven, there's nothing "like rank to spoil a fellow. He was a good "fellow once." So spoke Captain Johnson, as the two officers retreated together from the Earl's room.

And the Earl also saw Mr. Crowe the attorney. Mr. Crowe recognized at its full weight the importance of a man whom he might now call "My Lord" as often as he pleased, and as to whose pecuniary position he had made some gratifying inquiries. A very few words sufficed. Captain O'Hara had taken his departure, and the money would be paid regularly. Mr. Crowe also noticed the stern silence of the man, but thought that it was becoming in an Earl with so truly noble a property. Of the Castle Quin people who could hardly do more than pay their way like country gentlefolk, and who

were mere Irish, Mr. Crowe did not think much.

Every hour that brought the lord nearer to Liscannor added a weight to his bosom. As he drove his gig along the bleak road to Ennistimon his heart was very heavy indeed. At Maurice's mills, the only resting-place on the road, it had been his custom to give his horse a mouthful of water; but he would not do so now though the poor beast would fain have stopped there. He drove the animal on ruthlessly, himself driven by a feeling of unrest which would not allow him to pause. He hated the country now, and almost told himself that he hated all whom it contained. How miserable was his lot, that he should have bound himself in the opening of his splendour, in the first days of a career that might have been so splendid, to misfortune that was squalid and mean as this. To him, to one placed by circumstances as he was placed, it was squalid and mean. By a few soft words spoken to a poor girl whom he had

chanced to find among the rocks he had so bound himself with vile manacles, had so crippled, hampered and fettered himself, that he was forced to renounce all the glories of his station. Wealth almost unlimited was at his command,—and rank, and youth, and such personal gifts of appearance and disposition as best serve to win general love. He had talked to his brother of his unfitness for his earldom; but he could have blazoned it forth at Scroope and up in London, with the best of young lords, and have loved well to do so. But this adventure, as he had been wont to call it, had fallen upon him, and had broken him as it were in pieces. Thousands a year he would have paid to be rid of his adventure; but thousands a year, he knew well, were of no avail. He might have sent over some English Mr. Crowe with offers almost royal; but he had been able so to discern the persons concerned as to know that royal offers, of which the royalty would be simply money royalty, could be of no avail.

How would that woman have looked at any messenger who had come to her with offers of money,—and proposed to take her child into some luxurious but disgraceful seclusion? And in what language would Father Marty have expressed himself on such a proposed arrangement? And so the Earl of Scroope drove on with his heart falling ever lower and lower within his bosom.

It had of course been necessary that he should form some plan. He proposed to get rooms for one night at the little inn at Ennistimon, to leave his gig there, and then to take one of the country cars on to Liscannor. It would, he thought, be best to see the priest first. Let him look at his task which way he would, he found that every part of it was bad. An interview with Father Marty would be very bad, for he must declare his intentions in such a way that no doubt respecting them must be left on the priest's mind. He would speak only to three persons;—but to all those three he must

now tell the certain truth. There were causes at work which made it impossible that Kate O'Hara should become Countess of Scroope. They might tear him to pieces, but from that decision he would not budge. Subject to that decision they might do with him and with all that belonged to him almost as they pleased. He would explain this first to the priest if it should chance that he found the priest at home.

He left his gig and servant at Ennistimon and proceeded as he had intended along the road to Liscannor on an outside car. In the mid-distance about two miles out of the town he met Father Marty riding on the road. He had almost hoped,—nay, he had hoped,—that the priest might not be at home. But here was the lion in his path. "Ah, my Lord," said the priest in his sweetest tone of good humour,—and his tones when he was so disposed were very sweet,—"Ah, my Lord, this is a sight good "for sore eyes. They tould me you were to be

"here to-day or to-morrow, and I took it for "granted therefore it 'd be the day afther. "But you're as good as the best of your word." The Earl of Scroope got off the car, and holding the priest's hand, answered the kindly salutation. But he did so with a constrained air and with a solemnity which the priest also attributed to his newly-begotten rank. Fred Neville,—as he had been a week or two since,—was almost grovelling in the dust before the priest's eyes; but the priest for the moment thought that he was wrapping himself up in the sables and ermine of his nobility. However, he had come back,—which was more perhaps than Father Marty had expected,—and the best must be made of him with reference to poor Kate's future happiness. "You're going on to Ardkill, "I suppose, my Lord," he said.

"Yes;—certainly; but I intended to take the "Liscannor road on purpose to see you. I shall "leave the car at Liscannor and walk up. You "could not return, I suppose?"

"Well,—yes,—I might."

"If you could, Father Marty——"

"Oh, certainly." The priest now saw that there was something more in the man's manner than lordly pride. As the Earl got again up on his car, the priest turned his horse, and the two travelled back through the village without further conversation. The priest's horse was given up to the boy in the yard, and he then led the way into the house. "We are not much "altered in our ways, are we, my Lord?" he said as he moved a bottle of whiskey that stood on the sideboard. "Shall I offer you lunch?"

"No, thank you, Father Marty;—nothing, "thank you." Then he made a gasp and began. The bad hour had arrived, and it must be endured. "I have come back, as you see, "Father Marty. That was a matter of course."

"Well, yes, my Lord. As things have gone "it was a matter of course."

"I am here. I came as soon as it was "possible that I should come. Of course it was

"necessary that I should remain at home for "some days after what has occurred at "Scroope."

"No doubt;—no doubt. But you will not "be angry with me for saying that after what "has occurred here, your presence has been most "anxiously expected. However here you are, "and all may yet be well. As God's minister I "ought perhaps to upbraid. But I am not given "to much upbraiding, and I love that dear and "innocent young face too well to desire anything "now but that the owner of it should receive at "your hands that which is due to her before "God and man."

He perceived that the priest knew it all. But how could he wonder at this when that which ought to have been her secret and his had become known even to Lady Mary Quin? And he understood well what the priest meant when he spoke of that which was due to Kate O'Hara before God and man; and he could perceive, or thought that he perceived, that the priest did

not doubt of the coming marriage, now that he, the victim, was again back in the west of Ireland. And was he not the victim of a scheme? Had he not been allured on to make promises to the girl which he would not have made had the truth been told him as to her father? He would not even in his thoughts accuse Kate,—his Kate,—of being a participator in these schemes. But Mrs. O'Hara and the priest had certainly intrigued against him. He must remember that. In the terrible task which he was now compelled to begin he must build his defence chiefly upon that. Yes; he must begin his work, now, upon the instant. With all his golden prospects,—with all his golden honours already in his possession,—he could wish himself dead rather than begin it. But he could not die and have done it. "Father Marty," he said, "I cannot make Miss "O'Hara Countess of Scroope."

"Not make her Countess of Scroope! What "will you make her then?"

"As to that, I am here to discuss it with "you."

"What is it you main, sir? Afther you have "had your will of her, and polluted her sweet "innocence, you will not make her your wife! "You cannot look me in the face, Mr. Neville, "and tell me that."

There the priest was right. The young Earl could not look him in the face as he stammered out his explanation and proposal. The burly, strong old man stood perfectly still and silent as he, with hesitating and ill-arranged words, tried to gloze over and make endurable his past conduct and intentions as to the future. He still held some confused idea as to a form of marriage which should for all his life bind him to the woman, but which should give her no claim to the title, and her child no claim either to the title or the property. "You should have told "me of this Captain O'Hara," he said, as with many half-formed sentences he completed his suggestions.

"And it's on me you are throwing the blame?"

"You should have told me, Father Marty."

"By the great God above me, I did not "believe that a man could be such a villain! "As I look for glory I did not think it possible! "I should have tould you! Neither did I nor "did Mistress O'Hara know or believe that the "man was alive. And what has the man to do "with it? Is she vile because he has been "guilty? Is she other than you knew her to "be when you first took her to your bosom, "because of his sin?"

"It does make a difference, Mr. Marty."

"Afther what you have done it can make no "difference. When you swore to her that she "should be your wife, and conquered her by so "swearing, was there any clause in your con- "tract that you were not to be bound if you "found aught displaising to you in her parent- "age?"

"I ought to have known it all."

"You knew all that she knew;—all that I

"knew. You knew all that her mother knew.
"No, Lord Scroope. It cannot be that you
"should be so unutterably a villain. You are
"your own masther. Unsay what you have said
"to me, and her ears shall never be wounded or
"her heart broken by a hint of it."

"I cannot make her Countess of Scroope.
"You are a priest, and can use what words you
"please to me;—but I cannot make her
"Countess of Scroope."

"Faith,—and there will be more than words
"used, my young lord. As to your plot of a
"counterfeit marriage,——"

"I said nothing of a counterfeit marriage."

"What was it you said, then? I say you did.
"You proposed to me,—to me a priest of God's
"altar,—a false counterfeit marriage, so that
"those two poor women, who you are afraid to
"face, might be cajoled and chaited and ruined."

"I am going to face them instantly."

"Then must your heart be made of very
"stone. Shall I tell you the consequences?"

Then the priest paused awhile, and the young man bursting into tears, hid his face against the wall. "I will tell you the consequences, Lord "Scroope. They will die. The shame and "sorrow which you have brought on them, will "bring them to their graves,—and so there will "be an end of their throubles upon earth. But "while I live there shall be no rest for the sole "of your foot. I am ould, and may soon be "below the sod, but I will lave it as a legacy "behind me that your iniquity shall be pro- "claimed and made known in high places. "While I live I will follow you, and when I "am gone there shall be another to take the "work. My curse shall rest on you,—the "curse of a man of God, and you shall be "accursed. Now, if it suits you, you can go up "to them at Ardkill and tell them your story. "She is waiting to receive her lover. You can "go to her, and stab her to the heart at once. "Go, sir! Unless you can change all this "and alter your heart even as you hear

"my words, you are unfit to find shelter beneath "my roof."

Having so spoken, waiting to see the effect of his indignation, the priest went out, and got upon his horse, and went away upon his journey. The young lord knew that he had been insulted, was aware that words had been said to him so severe that one man, in his rank of life, rarely utters them to another; and he had stood the while with his face turned to the wall speechless and sobbing! The priest had gone, telling him to leave the house because his presence disgraced it; and he had made no answer. Yet he was the Earl of Scroope,—the thirteenth Earl of Scroope,—a man in his own country full of honours. Why had he come there to be called a villain? And why was the world so hard upon him that on hearing himself so called he could only weep like a girl? Had he done worse than other men? Was he not willing to make any retribution for his fault,—except by doing that which he had been taught to think

would be a greater fault? As he left the house he tried to harden his heart against Kate O'Hara. The priest had lied to him about her father. They must have known that the man was alive. They had caught him among them, and the priest's anger was a part of the net with which they had intended to surround him. The stake for which they had played had been very great. To be Countess of Scroope was indeed a chance worth some risk. Then, as he breasted the hill up towards the burial ground, he tried to strengthen his courage by realizing the magnitude of his own position. He bade himself remember that he was among people who were his inferiors in rank, education, wealth, manners, religion and nationality. He had committed an error. Of course he had been in fault. Did he wish to escape the consequences of his own misdoing? Was not his presence there so soon after the assumption of his family honours sufficient evidence of his generous admission of the claims to which he

was subject? Had he not offered to sacrifice himself as no other man would have done? But they were still playing for the high stakes. They were determined that the girl should be Countess of Scroope. He was determined that she should not be Countess of Scroope. He was still willing to sacrifice himself, but his family honours he would not pollute.

And then as he made his way past the burial ground and on towards the cliff there crept over him a feeling as to the girl very different from that reverential love which he had bestowed upon her when she was still pure. He remembered the poorness of her raiment, the meekness of her language, the small range of her ideas. The sweet soft coaxing loving smile, which had once been so dear to him, was infantine and gnoble. She was a plaything for an idle hour, not a woman to be taken out into the world with the high name of Countess of Scroope.

All this was the antagonism in his own hear against the indignant words which the priest

had spoken to him. For a moment he was so overcome that he had burst into tears. But not on that account would he be beaten away from his decision. The priest had called him a villain and had threatened and cursed him! As to the villainy he had already made up his mind which way his duty lay. For the threats it did not become him to count them as anything. The curses were the result of the man's barbarous religion. He remembered that he was the Earl of Scroope, and so remembering summoned up his courage as he walked on to the cottage.

CHAPTER X.

AT ARDKILL.

SHARP eyes had watched for the young lord's approach. As he came near to the cottage the door was opened and Kate O'Hara rushed out to meet him. Though his mind was turned against her,—was turned against her as hard and fast as all his false reasonings had been able to make it,—he could not but accord to her the reception of a lover. She was in his arms and he could not but press her close to his bosom. Her face was held up to his, and of course he covered it with kisses. She murmured to him sweet warm words of passionate love, and he could not but answer with endearing names. "I am your own,—am I not?" she said as she still clung to him. "All my own," he whis-

pered as he tightened his arm round her waist.

Then he asked after Mrs. O'Hara. "Yes; "mother is there. She will be almost as glad "to see you as I am. Nobody can be quite so "glad. Oh Fred,—my darling Fred,—am I "still to call you Fred?"

"What else, my pet?"

"I was thinking whether I would call you— "my Lord."

"For heaven's sake do not."

"No. You shall be Fred,—my Fred; Fred "to me, though all the world besides may call "you grand names." Then again she held up her face to him and pressed the hand that was round her waist closer to her girdle. To have him once more with her,—this was to taste all the joys of heaven while she was still on earth.

They entered the sitting-room together and met Mrs. O'Hara close to the door. "My Lord," she said, "you are very welcome back to us.

"Indeed we need you much. I will not upbraid "you as you come to make atonement for your "fault. If you will let me I will love you as a "son." As she spoke she held his right hand in both of hers, and then she lifted up her face and kissed his cheek.

He could not stay her words, nor could he refuse the kiss. And yet to him the kiss was as the kiss of Judas, and the words were false words, plotted words, pre-arranged, so that after hearing them there should be no escape for him. But he would escape. He resolved again, even then, that he would escape; but he could not answer her words at the moment. Though Mrs. O'Hara held him by the hand, Kate still hung to his other arm. He could not thrust her away from him. She still clung to him when he released his right hand, and almost lay upon his breast when he seated himself on the sofa. She looked into his eyes for tenderness, and he could not refrain himself from bestowing upon her the happiness. "Oh, mother," she

said, "he is so brown;—but he is handsomer "than ever." But though he smiled on her, giving back into her eyes her own soft look of love, yet he must tell his tale.

He was still minded that she should have all but the one thing,—all if she would take it. She should not be Countess of Scroope; but in any other respect he would pay what penalty might be required for his transgression. But in what words should he explain this to those two women? Mrs. O'Hara had called him by his title and had claimed him as her son. No doubt she had all the right to do so which promises made by himself could give her. He had sworn that he would marry the girl, and in point of time had only limited his promise by the old Earl's life. The old Earl was dead, and he stood pledged to the immediate performance of his vow,—doubly pledged if he were at all solicitous for the honour of his future bride. But in spite of all promises she should never be Countess of Scroope!

Some tinkling false-tongued phrase as to lover's oaths had once passed across his memory and had then sufficed to give him a grain of comfort. There was no comfort to be found in it now. He began to tell himself, in spite of his manhood, that it might have been better for him and for them that he should have broken this matter to them by a well-chosen messenger. But it was too late for that now. He had faced the priest and had escaped from him with the degradation of a few tears. Now he was in the presence of the lioness and her young. The lioness had claimed him as a denizen of the forest; and, would he yield to her, she no doubt would be very tender to him. But, as he was resolved not to yield, he began to find that he had been wrong to enter her den. As he looked at her, knowing that she was at this moment softened by false hopes, he could nevertheless see in her eye the wrath of the wild animal. How was he to begin to make his purpose known to them.

"And now you must tell us everything," said Kate, still encircled by his arm.

"What must I tell you?"

"You will give up the regiment at once?"

"I have done so already."

"But you must not give up Ardkill;—must "he, mother?"

"He may give it up when he takes you from "it, Kate."

"But he will take you too, mother?"

The lioness at any rate wanted nothing for herself. "No, love. I shall remain here among "my rocks, and shall be happy if I hear that "you are happy."

"But you won't part us altogether,—will you, "Fred?"

"No, love."

"I knew he wouldn't. And mother may "come to your grand house and creep into some "pretty little corner there, where I can go and "visit her, and tell her that she shall always be "my own, own, own darling mother."

He felt that he must put a stop to this in some way, though the doing of it would be very dreadful. Indeed in the doing of it the whole of his task would consist. But still he shirked it, and used his wit in contriving an answer which might still deceive without being false in words. "I think," said he, "that I shall never "live at any grand house, as you call it."

"Not live at Scroope?" asked Mrs. O'Hara.

"I think not. It will hardly suit me."

"I shall not regret it," said Kate. "I care "nothing for a grand house. I should only be "afraid of it. I know it is dark and sombre, "for you have said so. Oh, Fred, any place "will be Paradise to me, if I am there with you."

He felt that every moment of existence so continued was a renewed lie. She was lying in his arms, in her mother's presence, almost as his acknowledged wife. And she was speaking of her future home as being certainly his also. But what could he do? How could he begin to tell the truth? His home should be her home,

if she would come to him,—not as his wife. That idea of some half-valid morganatic marriage had again been dissipated by the rough reproaches of the priest, and could only be used as a prelude to his viler proposal. And, though he loved the girl after his fashion, he desired to wound her by no such vile proposal. He did not wish to live a life of sin, if such life might be avoided. If he made his proposal, it would be but for her sake; or rather that he might show her that he did not wish to cast her aside. It was by asserting to himself that for her sake he would relinquish his own rank, were that possible, that he attempted to relieve his own conscience. But, in the mean time, she was in his arms talking about their joint future home!

"Where do you think of living?" asked Mrs. O'Hara in a tone which shewed plainly the anxiety with which she asked the question.

"Probably abroad," he said.

"But mother may go with us?" The girl felt that the tension of his arm was relaxed, and

she knew that all was not well with him. And if there was ought amiss with him, how much more must it be amiss with her? "What is it, "Fred?" she said. "There is some secret. "Will you not tell it to me?" Then she whispered into his ear words intended for him alone, though her mother heard them. "If "there be a secret you should tell it me now. "Think how it is with me. Your words are "life and death to me now." He still held her with loosened arms, but did not answer her. He sat, looking out into the middle of the room with fixed eyes, and he felt that drops of perspiration were on his brow. And he knew that the other woman was glaring at him with the eyes of an injured lioness, though he did not dare to turn his own to her face. "Fred, tell "me; tell me." And Kate rose up, with her knees upon the sofa, bending over him, gazing into his countenance and imploring him.

"There must be disappointment," he said; and he did not know the sound of his own voice.

"What disappointment? Speak to me. "What disappointment?"

"Disappointment!" shrieked the mother. "How disappointment? There shall be no "disappointment." Rising from her chair, she hurried across the room, and took her girl from his arms. "Lord Scroope, tell us what you "mean. I say there shall be no disappoint- "ment. Sit away from him, Kate, till he has "told us what it is." Then they heard the sound of a horse's foot passing close to the window, and they all knew that it was the priest. "There is Father Marty," said Mrs. O'Hara. "He shall make you tell it."

"I have already told him." Lord Scroope as he said this rose and moved towards the door; but he himself was almost unconscious of the movement. Some idea probably crossed his mind that he would meet the priest, but Mrs. O'Hara thought that he intended to escape from them.

She rushed between him and the door and

held him with both her hands. "No; no; "you do not leave us in that way, though you "were twice an Earl."

"I am not thinking of leaving you."

"Mother, you shall not hurt him; you shall "not insult him," said the girl. "He does not "mean to harm me. He is my own, and no "one shall touch him."

"Certainly I will not harm you. Here is "Father Marty. Mrs. O'Hara you had better "be tranquil. You should remember that you "have heard nothing yet of what I would say "to you."

"Whose fault is that? Why do you not "speak? Father Marty, what does he mean "when he tells my girl that there must be "disappointment for her? Does he dare to tell "me that he hesitates to make her his wife?"

The priest took the mother by the hand and placed her on the chair in which she usually sat. Then, almost without a word, he led Kate from the room to her own chamber,

and bade her wait a minute till he should come back to her. Then he returned to the sitting-room and at once addressed himself to Lord Scroope. "Have you dared," he said, "to tell "them what you hardly dared to tell to me?"

"He has dared to tell us nothing," said Mrs. O'Hara.

"I do not wonder at it. I do not think that "any man could say to her that which he told "me that he would do."

"Mrs. O'Hara," said the young lord, with some return of courage now that the girl had left them, "that which I told Mr. Marty this "morning, I will now tell to you. For your "daughter I will do anything that you and she "and he may wish,—but one thing. I cannot "make her Countess of Scroope."

"You must make her your wife," said the woman, shouting at him.

"I will do so to-morrow if a way can be "found by which she shall not become Countess "of Scroope."

"That is, he will marry her without making her his wife," said the priest. "He will jump "over a broomstick with her and will ask me to "help him,—so that your feelings and hers may "be spared for a week or so. Mrs. O'Hara, he "is a villain,—a vile, heartless, cowardly repro- "bate, so low in the scale of humanity that I "degrade myself by spaking to him. He calls "himself an English peer! Peer to what? "Certainly to no one worthy to be called a "man!" So speaking, the priest addressed himself to Mrs. O'Hara, but as he spoke his eyes were fixed full on the face of the young lord.

"I will have his heart out of his body," exclaimed Mrs. O'Hara.

"Heart;—he has no heart. You may touch "his pocket;—or his pride, what he calls his "pride, a damnable devilish inhuman vanity; "or his name,—that bugbear of a title by which "he trusts to cover his baseness; or his skin, for "he is a coward. Do you see his cheek now? "But as for his heart,—you cannot get at that."

"I will get at his life," said the woman.

"Mr. Marty, you allow yourself a liberty of "speech which even your priesthood will not "warrant."

"Lay a hand upon me if you can. There is "not blood enough about you to do it. Were "it not that the poor child has been wake and "too trusting, I would bid her spit on you "rather than take you for her husband." Then he paused, but only for a moment. "Sir, "you must marry her, and there must be an "end of it. In no other way can you be "allowed to live."

"Would you murder me?"

"I would crush you like an insect beneath "my nail. Murder you! Have you thought "what murder is;—that there are more ways "of murder than one? Have you thought of "the life of that young girl who now bears in "her womb the fruit of your body? Would "you murder her,—because she loved you, and "trusted you, and gave you all simply because

"you asked her; and then think of your own "life? As the God of Heaven is above me, "and sees me now, and the Saviour in whose "blood I trust, I would lay down my life this "instant, if I could save her from your heart-"lessness." So saying he too turned away his face and wept like a child.

After this the priest was gentler in his manner to the young man, and it almost seemed as though the Earl was driven from his decision. He ceased, at any rate, to assert that Kate should never be Countess of Scroope, and allowed both the mother and Father Marty to fall into a state of doubt as to what his last resolve might be. It was decided that he should go down to Ennistimon and sleep upon it. On the morrow he would come up again, and in the meantime he would see Father Marty at the inn. There were many prayers addressed to him both by the mother and the priest, and such arguments used that he had been almost shaken. "But you will

"come to-morrow?" said the mother, looking at the priest as she spoke.

"I will certainly come to-morrow."

"No doubt he will come to-morrow," said Father Marty,—who intended to imply that if Lord Scroope escaped out of Ennistimon without his knowledge, he would be very much surprised.

"Shall I not say a word to Kate?" the Earl asked as he was going.

"Not till you are prepared to tell her that "she shall be your wife," said the priest.

But this was a matter as to which Kate herself had a word to say. When they were in the passage she came out from her room, and again rushed into her lover's arms. "Oh, "Fred, let me told,—let me told. I will go "with you anywhere if you will take me."

"He is to come up to-morrow, Kate," said her mother.

"He will be here early to-morrow, and "everything shall be settled then," said the

priest, trying to assume a happy and contented tone.

"Dearest Kate, I will be here by noon," said Lord Scroope, returning the girl's caresses.

"And you will not desert me?"

"No, darling, no." And then he went, leaving the priest behind him at the cottage.

Father Marty was to be with him at the inn by eight, and then the whole matter must be again discussed. He felt that he had been very weak, that he had made no use,—almost no use at all,—of the damning fact of the Captain's existence. He had allowed the priest to talk him down in every argument, and had been actually awed by the girl's mother, and yet he was determined that he would not yield. He felt more strongly than ever, now that he had again seen Kate O'Hara, that it would not be right that such a one as she should be made Countess of Scroope. Not only would she disgrace the place, but she would be unhappy

in it, and would shame him. After all the promises that he had made he could not, and he would not, take her to Scroope as his wife. How could she hold up her head before such women as Sophie Mellerby and others like her? It would be known by all his friends that he had been taken in and swindled by low people in the County Clare, and he would be regarded by all around him as one who had absolutely ruined himself. He had positively resolved that she should not be Countess of Scroope, and to that resolution he would adhere. The foul-mouthed priest had called him a coward, but he would be no coward. The mother had said that she would have his life. If there were danger in that respect he must encounter it. As he returned to Ennistimon he again determined that Kate O'Hara should never become Countess of Scroope.

For three hours Father Marty remained with him that night, but did not shake him. He had now become accustomed to the priest's

wrath and could endure it. And he thought also that he could now endure the mother. The tears of the girl and her reproaches he still did fear.

"I will do anything that you can dictate "short of that," he said again to Father Marty.

"Anything but the one thing that you have "sworn to do?"

"Anything but the one thing that I have "sworn not to do." For he had told the priest of the promises he had made both to his uncle and to his uncle's widow.

"Then," said the priest, as he crammed his hat on his head, and shook the dust off his feet, "if I were you I would not go to Ardkill to-morrow if I valued my life." Nevertheless Father Marty slept at Ennistimon that night, and was prepared to bar the way if any attempt at escape were made.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE CLIFFS.

No attempt at escape was made. The Earl breakfasted by himself at about nine, and then lighting a cigar, roamed about for a while round the Inn, thinking of the work that was now before him. He saw nothing of Father Marty though he knew that the priest was still in Ennistimon. And he felt that he was watched. They might have saved themselves that trouble, for he certainly had no intention of breaking his word to them. So he told himself, thinking as he did so, that people such as these could not understand that an Earl of Scroope would not be untrue to his word. And yet since he had been back in County Clare he had almost regretted that he had not broken his faith to

them and remained in England. At half-past ten he started on a car, having promised to be at the cottage at noon, and he told his servant that he should certainly leave Ennistimon that day at three. The horse and gig were to be ready for him exactly at that hour.

On this occasion he did not go through Liscannor, but took the other road to the burial ground. There he left his car and slowly walked along the cliffs till he came to the path leading down from them to the cottage. In doing this he went somewhat out of his way, but he had time on his hands and he did not desire to be at the cottage before the hour he had named. It was a hot midsummer day, and there seemed to be hardly a ripple on the waves. The tide was full in, and he sat for a while looking down upon the blue waters. What an ass had he made himself, coming thither in quest of adventures! He began to see now the meaning of such idleness of purpose as that to which he had looked for pleasure and excitement. Even

the ocean itself and the very rocks had lost their charm for him. It was all one blaze of blue light, the sky above and the water below, in which there was neither beauty nor variety. How poor had been the life he had chosen! He had spent hour after hour in a comfortless dirty boat, in company with a wretched ignorant creature, in order that he might shoot a few birds and possibly a seal. All the world had been open to him, and yet how miserable had been his ambition! And now he could see no way out of the ruin he had brought upon himself.

When the time had come he rose from his seat and took the path down to the cottage. At the corner of the little patch of garden ground attached to it he met Mrs. O'Hara. Her hat was on her head, and a light shawl was on her shoulders as though she had prepared herself for walking. He immediately asked after Kate. She told him that Kate was within and should see him presently. Would it not be better

that they two should go up on the cliffs together, and then say what might be necessary for the mutual understanding of their purposes? "There should be no talking of all this before "Kate," said Mrs. O'Hara.

"That is true."

"You can imagine what she must feel if she "is told to doubt. Lord Scroope, will you not "say at once that there shall be no doubt? "You must not ruin my child in return for her "love!"

"If there must be ruin I would sooner bear "it myself," said he. And then they walked on without further speech till they had reached a point somewhat to the right, and higher than that on which he had sat before. It had ever been a favourite spot with her, and he had often sat there between the mother and daughter. It was almost the summit of the cliff, but there was yet a higher pitch which screened it from the north, so that the force of the wind was broken. The fall from it was

almost precipitous to the ocean, so that the face of the rocks immediately below was not in view; but there was a curve here in the line of the shore, and a little bay in the coast, which exposed to view the whole side of the opposite cliff, so that the varying colours of the rocks might be seen. The two ladies had made a seat upon the turf, by moving the loose stones and levelling the earth around, so that they could sit securely on the very edge. Many many hours had Mrs. O'Hara passed upon the spot, both summer and winter, watching the sunset in the west, and listening to the screams of the birds. "There are no gulls now," she said as she seated herself,—as though for a moment she had forgotten the great subject which filled her mind.

"No;—they never show themselves in "weather like this. They only come when the "wind blows. I wonder where they go when "the sun shines."

"They are just the opposite to men and

"women who only come around you in fine "weather. How hot it is!" and she threw her shawl back from her shoulders.

"Yes, indeed. I walked up from the burial "ground and I found that it was very hot. "Have you seen Father Marty this morning?"

"No. Have you?" she asked the question turning upon him very shortly.

"Not to-day. He was with me till late last "night."

"Well." He did not answer her. He had nothing to say to her. In fact everything had been said yesterday. If she had questions to ask he would answer them. "What did you "settle last night? When he went from me "an hour after you were gone, he said that it "was impossible that you should mean to "destroy her."

"God forbid that I should destroy her."

"He said that,—that you were afraid of her "father."

"I am."

"And of me."

"No;—not of you, Mrs. O'Hara."

"Listen to me. He said that such a one as "you cannot endure the presence of an unedu- "cated and ill-mannered mother-in-law. Do "not interrupt me, Lord Scroope. If you will "marry her, my girl shall never see my face "again; and I will cling to that man and will "not leave him for a moment, so that he shall "never put his foot near your door. Our name "shall never be spoken in your hearing. She "shall never even write to me if you think it "better that we shall be so separated."

"It is not that," he said.

"What is it, then?"

"Oh, Mrs. O'Hara, you do not understand. "You,—you I could love dearly."

"I would have you keep all your love for "her."

"I do love her. She is good enough for "me. She is too good; and so are you. It "is for the family, and not for myself."

"How will she harm the family?"

"I swore to my uncle that I would not make "her Countess of Scroope."

"And have you not sworn to her again and "again that she should be your wife? Do "you think that she would have done for you "what she has done, had you not so sworn? "Lord Scroope, I cannot think that you really "mean it." She put both her hands softly upon his arm and looked up to him imploring his mercy.

He got up from his seat and roamed along the cliff, and she followed him, still imploring. Her tones were soft, and her words were the words of a suppliant. Would he not relent and save her child from wretchedness, from ruin and from death. "I will keep her with "me till I die," he said.

"But not as your wife?"

"She shall have all attention from me,— "everything that a woman's heart can desire. "You two shall be never separated."

"But not as your wife?"

"I will live where she and you may please. "She shall want nothing that my wife would "possess."

"But not as your wife?"

"Not as Countess of Scroope."

"You would have her as your mistress, "then?" As she asked this question the tone of her voice was altogether altered, and the threatening lion-look had returned to her eyes. They were now near the seat, confronted to each other; and the fury of her bosom, which for a while had been dominated by the tenderness of the love for her daughter, was again raging within her. Was it possible that he should be able to treat them thus,—that he should break his word and go from them scathless, happy, joyous, with all the delights of the world before him, leaving them crushed into dust beneath his feet. She had been called upon from her youth upwards to bear injustice,—but of all injustice surely this

would be the worst. "As your mistress," she repeated,—"and I her mother, am to stand by "and see it, and know that my girl is dis- "honoured! Would your mother have borne "that for your sister? How would it be if "your sister were as that girl is now?"

"I have no sister."

"And therefore you are thus hard-hearted. "She shall never be your harlot;—never. I "would myself sooner take from her the life "I gave her. You have destroyed her, but "she shall never be a thing so low as that."

"I will marry her,—in a foreign land."

"And why not here? She is as good as "you. Why should she not bear the name "you are so proud of dinning into our ears? "Why should she not be a Countess? Has "she ever disgraced herself? If she is dis- "graced in your eyes you must be a Devil."

"It is not that," he said hoarsely.

"What is it? What has she done that she "should be thus punished? Tell me, man,

"that she shall be your lawful wife." As she said this she caught him roughly by the collar of his coat and shook him with her arm.

"It cannot be so," said the Earl of Scroope.

"It cannot be so! But I say it shall,—or,—"or—! What are you, that she should be in "your hands like this? Say that she shall be "your wife, or you shall never live to speak to "another woman." The peril of his position on the top of the cliff had not occurred to him;—nor did it occur to him now. He had been there so often that the place gave him no sense of danger. Nor had that peril,—as it was thought afterwards by those who most closely made inquiry on the matter,—ever occurred to her. She had not brought him there that she might frighten him with that danger, or that she might avenge herself by the power which it gave her. But now the idea flashed across her maddened mind. "Miscreant," she said. And she bore him back to the very edge of the precipice.

"You'll have me over the cliff," he exclaimed hardly even yet putting out his strength against her.

"And so I will, by the help of God. Now "think of her! Now think of her!" And as she spoke she pressed him backwards towards his fall. He had power enough to bend his knee, and to crouch beneath her grasp on to the loose crumbling soil of the margin of the rocks. He still held her by her cuff and it seemed for a moment as though she must go with him. But, on a sudden, she spurned him with her foot on the breast, the rag of cloth parted in his hand, and the poor wretch tumbled forth alone into eternity.

That was the end of Frederic Neville, Earl of Scroope, and the end, too, of all that poor girl's hopes in this world. When you stretch yourself on the edge of those cliffs and look down over the abyss on the sea below it seems as though the rocks were so absolutely perpendicular, that a stone dropped with an extended hand would

fall amidst the waves. But in such measurement the eye deceives itself, for the rocks in truth slant down; and the young man, as he fell, struck them again and again; and at last it was a broken mangled corpse that reached the blue waters below.

Her Kate was at last avenged. The woman stood there in her solitude for some minutes thinking of the thing she had done. The man had injured her,—sorely,—and she had punished him. He had richly deserved the death which he had received from her hands. In these minutes, as regarded him, there was no remorse. But how should she tell the news to her child? The blow which had thrust him over would, too probably, destroy other life than his. Would it not be better that her girl should so die? What could prolonged life give her that would be worth her having? As for herself,—in these first moments of her awe she took no thought of her own danger. It did not occur to her that she might tell how the man had ventured too

near the edge and had fallen by mischance. As regarded herself she was proud of the thing she had accomplished; but how should she tell her child that it was done?

She slowly took the path, not to the cottage, but down towards the burial ground and Liscannor, passing the car which was waiting in vain for the young lord. On she walked with rapid step, indifferent to the heat, still proud of what she had done,—raging with a maddened pride. How little had they two asked of the world! And then this man had come to them and robbed them of all that little, had spoiled them ruthlessly, cheating them with lies, and then excusing himself by the grandeur of his blood! During that walk it was that she first repeated to herself the words that were ever afterwards on her tongue; An Eye for an Eye. Was not that justice? And, had she not taken the eye herself, would any Court in the world have given it to her? Yes;—an eye for an eye! Death in return for ruin!

One destruction for another! The punishment had been just. An eye for an eye! Let the Courts of the world now say what they pleased, they could not return to his earldom the man who had plundered and spoiled her child. He had sworn that he would not make her Kate Countess of Scroope! Nor should he make any other woman a Countess!

Rapidly she went down by the burying ground, and into the priest's house. Father Marty was there, and she stalked at once into his presence. "Ha;—Mrs. O'Hara! And where "is Lord Scroope?"

"There," she said, pointing out towards the ocean. "Under the rocks!"

"He has fallen!"

"I thrust him down with my hands and with "my feet." As she said this, she used her hand and her foot as though she were now using her strength to push the man over the edge. "Yes, I thrust him down, and he fell splashing "into the waves. I heard it as his body struck

"the water. He will shoot no more of the sea-
"gulls now."

"You do not mean that you have murdered
"him?"

"You may call it murder if you please,
"Father Marty. An eye for an eye, Father
"Marty! It is justice, and I have done it.
"An Eye for an Eye!"

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

THE story of the poor mad woman who still proclaims in her seclusion the justice of the deed which she did, has now been told. It may perhaps be well to collect the scattered ends of the threads of the tale for the benefit of readers who desire to know the whole of a history.

Mrs. O'Hara never returned to the cottage on the cliffs after the perpetration of the deed. On the unhappy priest devolved the duty of doing whatever must be done. The police at the neighbouring barracks were told that the young lord had perished by a fall from the cliffs, and by them search was made for the body. No real attempt was set on foot to

screen the woman who had done the deed by any concealment of the facts. She herself was not alive to the necessity of making any such attempt. "An eye for an eye!" she said to the head-constable when the man interrogated her. It soon became known to all Liscannor, to Ennistimon, to the ladies at Castle Quin, and to all the barony of Corcomroe that Mrs. O'Hara had thrust the Earl of Scroope over the cliffs of Moher, and that she was now detained at the house of Father Marty in the custody of a policeman. Before the day was over it was declared also that she was mad,—and that her daughter was dying.

The deed which the woman had done and the death of the young lord were both terrible to Father Marty; but there was a duty thrown upon him more awful to his mind even than these. Kate O'Hara, when her mother appeared at the priest's house, had been alone at the cottage. By degrees Father Marty

learned from the wretched woman something of the circumstances of that morning's work. Kate had not seen her lover that day, but had been left in the cottage while her mother went out to meet the man, and if possible to persuade him to do her child justice. The priest understood that she would be waiting for them,—or more probably searching for them on the cliffs. He got upon his horse and rode up the hill with a heavy heart. What should he tell her; and how should he tell it?

Before he reached the cottage she came running down the hillside to him. "Father "Marty, where is mother? Where is Mr. "Neville? You know. I see that you know. "Where are they?" He got off his horse and put his arm round her body and seated her beside himself on the rising bank by the wayside. "Why don't you speak?" she said.

"I cannot speak," he murmured. "I cannot "tell you."

"Is he—dead?" He only buried his face in his hands. "She has killed him! Mother —mother!" Then, with one loud long wailing shriek, she fell upon the ground.

Not for a month after that did she know anything of what happened around her. But yet it seemed that during that time her mind had not been altogether vacant, for when she awoke to self-consciousness, she knew at least that her lover was dead. She had been taken into Ennistimon and there, under the priest's care, had been tended with infinite solicitude; but almost with a hope on his part that nature might give way and that she might die. Overwhelmed as she was with sorrows past and to come would it not be better for her that she should go hence and be no more seen? But as Death cannot be barred from the door when he knocks at it, so neither can he be made to come as a guest when summoned. She still lived, though life had so little to offer to her.

But Mrs. O'Hara never saw her child again. With passionate entreaties she begged of the police that her girl might be brought to her, that she might be allowed if it were only to see her face or to touch her hand. Her entreaties to the priest, who was constant in his attendance upon her in the prison to which she was removed from his house, were piteous,—almost heartbreaking. But the poor girl, though she was meek, silent, and almost apathetic in her tranquillity, could not even bear the mention of her mother's name. Her mother had destroyed the father of the child that was to be born to her, her lover, her hero, her god; and in her remembrance of the man who had betrayed her, she learned to execrate the mother who had sacrificed everything,—her very reason,—in avenging the wrongs of her child!

Mrs. O'Hara was taken away from the priest's house to the County Gaol, but was then in a condition of acknowledged insanity. That she

had committed the murder no one who heard the story doubted, but of her guilt there was no evidence whatever beyond the random confession of a maniac. No detailed confession was ever made by her. "An eye for an eye," she would say when interrogated,—"Is not that "justice? A tooth for a tooth!" Though she was for a while detained in prison it was impossible to prosecute her,—even with a view to an acquittal on the ground of insanity; and while the question was under discussion among the lawyers, provision for her care and maintenance came from another source.

As also it did for the poor girl. For a while everything was done for her under the care of Father Marty;—but there was another Earl of Scroope in the world, and as soon as the story was known to him and the circumstances had been made clear, he came forward to offer on behalf of the family whatever assistance might now avail them anything. As months rolled

on the time of Kate O'Hara's further probation came, but Fate spared her the burden and despair of a living infant. It was at last thought better that she should go to her father and live in France with him, reprobate though the man was. The priest offered to find a home for her in his own house at Liscannor; but, as he said himself, he was an old man, and one who when he went would leave no home behind him. And then it was felt that the close vicinity of the spot on which her lover had perished would produce a continued melancholy that might crush her spirits utterly. Captain O'Hara therefore was desired to come and fetch his child,—and he did so, with many protestations of virtue for the future. If actual pecuniary comfort can conduce to virtue in such a man, a chance was given him. The Earl of Scroope was only too liberal in the settlement he made. But the settlement was on the daughter and not on the father; and it is possible therefore that some gentle restraint

may have served to keep him out of the deep abysses of wickedness.

The effects of the tragedy on the coast of Clare spread beyond Ireland, and drove another woman to the verge of insanity. When the Countess of Scroope heard the story, she shut herself up at Scroope and would see no one but her own servants. When the succeeding Earl came to the house which was now his own, she refused to admit him into her presence, and declined even a renewed visit from Miss Mellerby who at that time had returned to her father's roof. At last the clergyman of Scroope prevailed, and to him she unburdened her soul,—acknowledging, with an energy that went perhaps beyond the truth, the sin of her own conduct in producing the catastrophe which had occurred. "I knew that he had wronged "her, and yet I bade him not to make her his "wife." That was the gist of her confession and she declared that the young man's blood

would be on her hands till she died. A small cottage was prepared for her on the estate, and there she lived in absolute seclusion till death relieved her from her sorrows.

And she lived not only in seclusion, but in solitude almost to her death. It was not till four years after the occurrences which have been here related that John fourteenth Earl of Scroope brought a bride home to Scroope Manor. The reader need hardly be told that that bride was Sophie Mellerby. When the young Countess came to live at the Manor the old Countess admitted her visits and at last found some consolation in her friend's company. But it lasted not long, and then she was taken away and buried beside her lord in the chancel of the parish church.

When it was at last decided that the law should not interfere at all as to the personal custody of the poor maniac who had sacrificed everything to avenge her daughter, the Earl

of Scroope selected for her comfort the asylum in which she still continues to justify from morning to night, and, alas, often all the night long, the terrible deed of which she is ever thinking. "An eye for an eye," she says to the woman who watches her.

"Oh, yes, ma'am; certainly."

"An Eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth! "Is it not so? An eye for an eye!"

THE END.

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